CHRIST
and His Men

Paul Rader

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Christ and His Men

BY

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FOREWORD

IT IS most fortunate that the book, "Christ and His Men," which for years has had such a wide and profound influence in Scandinavian circles, is now, through the present admirable translation from the Danish, made accessible for readers throughout the English-speaking world. Its author, the late Olfert Ricard of Copenhagen, rendered to the youth of Denmark a service not unlike that performed by Henry Drummond to young men and boys of Britain and America. For twelve years, as the head of the Young Men's Christian Association, he made an enormous contribution to the boyhood and manhood of that great city. This vital ministry was continued and expanded during the next twenty years when as a pastor he came to be regarded as the most outstanding Danish preacher of his time. His was one of the largest congregations in Denmark. During the past decade one of the leading secular dailies of the country each Monday printed his sermon of the preceding day, and for years these messages have been broadcast. The circulation of his books stands among the highest of Danish authors. Through his unique eloquence as a speaker, his arresting style as a writer, his

ripe scholarship and freshness of thought, his wholesome humor, his responsiveness to large visions and challenges, and, above all, his genuine spirituality and capacity for friendship, he has won and holds a wonderful following.

"Christ and His Men" reveals remarkable spiritual penetration and a deep knowledge of the religious psychology of youth. It combines fidelity to the original records and awareness of the results of modern scholarship with a healthy use of the imagination. The note of reality sounds out from every chapter. The author has drawn from the depths of personal experience and from his countless intimate and enriching contacts with young men.

This finely interpretative and truly creative work should be attentively read and heeded by young men who are ambitious to develop a full-orbed personality and a faith and character which will stand the strain of the modern age. It will also be welcomed by teachers and by leaders of societies which aim to influence aright the ideals and habits of youth. To ministers of the Gospel it affords a stimulating and, I venture to add, a needed example of a high order of expository preaching. In a day when we are surrounded by a new generation, at once the most critical, the most inquiring, the most alert intellectually, and, in some respects, the most adventurous, and

at a time of so many youth movements, not a few of which are without an adequate sense of direction, it is well to fix the gaze of youth and of the leaders of youth upon the Central Personality, the unerring principles and the unchanging purposes of that Movement supreme among all movements affecting the life and destiny of youth.

—Dr. John R. Mott.

S. S. "Majestic," August 20, 1929.

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INTRODUCTION

And We Beheld His Glory
—John.

He is like the mountain; we may circle round and round it for many hours: still it seems just as far away and just as unapproachable in its white majesty. I saw that miracle, Fujiyama, sailing aloft in the blue heavens like an airy cone, a dreamlike air-vision of the most entrancing beauty, and our train crawled at a snail's pace for hours around it, while it still seemed to be moving away from us.

O, how I should like to write a book about Jesus Christ—I have long wished to do it—a book written in language suited to our day, that could cause the youth of my time to marvel at the richness of His being and rejoice in gazing upon His radiance.

But I have not been able to do it, at least not yet; perhaps someone will be able to do it who has walked with Him many more years than I.

However, we do gradually get nearer to the mountain, and little by little some of its beauties begin to reveal themselves with ever-increasing clearness. I persuade myself that I do, after all, know a little that I can tell about

Christ, both as to the light which shines from His own eyes and of the reflection which comes back to us from those human hearts that surrounded and understood and loved Him. So now the reader knows my hope: it will be no exhaustive nor connected account that I shall be able to give—simply fragments that may seem almost accidental, but which would hardly appear so if I but knew my own psychological development better. These, then, are the traits which came especially to the fore when I meditated upon Him and His men, and of which I can therefore better tell.

My materials are, first of all, the original documents, the four accounts by eye witnesses and contemporaries, which I have been forced, of necessity, to subject to a renewed, careful study during the past years—an examination which, to my own surprise and joy, has confirmed me in the belief that they who wrote the gospels were not only truthful men of clear spiritual vision, but more than that, men who were under the influence and sway of a higher Spirit. But I have compared these documents with the experiences I have had during a period of years in my own spiritual life and in my work with the youth of my own country, from which work this book is, to some extent, an outgrowth.

My method is thus made plain. I have tried to understand those far-away characters from the standpoint of what modern religious psychology can teach us—to read, as well as

I could, between the lines, guessing at motives and thoughts, tracing spiritual development both in Christ and in His closest friends by comparing their words and thoughts with our own experiences. Conversely, I discovered also that things which in my own life and in the lives of my young contemporaries puzzled me and caused difficulties found their solution, or at least a certain degree of explanation, in similar experiences of Christ and His first disciples.

My one-sided development during a work of many years among our youth must serve to explain that this book has largely to do with spiritual life among the young. Nevertheless, I have grown somewhat older, at least, while this work was in progress, so older readers will no doubt also find something they are able to recognize.

All of the chapters have first been given as lectures; most of them have been given their final form during the course of a voyage over two oceans.

CHAPTER I

The Saga of John the Baptist; and the Time of Preparation in a Human Life

I

THERE is a star called the Morning Star. Few eyes can see it, for it appears late at night, at that hour when a cool breeze blows the waves of night in long lines toward the shores of morning. The little ship's boy on his lonely dogwatch, and the soldier walking post, see it and are glad, the while they swing their numbed arms to warm themselves; for now they know that it will soon be day. For this greenish-white shimmering morning star is the herald of the sun, and announces the coming of ruddy morn.

A morning star appeared in Israel; its name was John. The night had been long, and one star of promise after another had shone forth; the first had already been kindled above the closed garden when God had promised to the woman an heir who should crush the serpent's head; a great and lovely star shone also over Abraham when he went forth into the vast and lonely stretches, away from native land and home and kin: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Star after star had peeped forth, but the last watches of the night were starless and dark, and men

longingly strained their eyes for the morning. Sometimes one sees a little group of people at the entrance to a hospital, awaiting the visitation hour. So also at the last a little circle of godly folk, for the most part old people, had formed in the court of the temple waiting, waiting for day. They were the ones who were to encircle protectingly the manger of the Holy Child, and whose voices, attuned to the harmonies of the ancient harp of David, were to break forth into a morning song in praise of that heavenly sunrise which was soon to come.

Then it was that the lonely morning star, John, appeared and was reflected in the waters of Jordan; surely now the sun would soon rise.

There is every reason for our studying this man John, for he is perhaps the greatest man that ever lived. At any rate Jesus described him as such, not to John himself, but to John's friends and foes alike; and not when John was at the height of his power, but when he was a fallen celebrity. Then Jesus said these words: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." What Shakespeare is as a poet, what Spurgeon is as a preacher, and what Napoleon is as a general —John is as a man.

He was the son of a priest. Ministers' sons are, as is well-known, the worst boys of all. That is to say, in point of fact, they are often

the truest. When, for a time at least, they have made up their minds not to serve God, they know full well, thanks to home-training, that it does no good to pretend that they wish to serve Him. They play no double game, as certain other young people do, trying to show God a pious face while living according to their own desires. They burn their bridges behind them, at least for a time.

A young girl once came to visit an old minister's wife in a parsonage among the mountains of Judea and was mightily helped by her; but the old woman, nevertheless, profited most by the visit. It was Mary who came to seek counsel from Elizabeth. A marvellous thing had happened to her as she sat alone in her little home in Nazareth. The Name which is above all other names had been uttered for the first time in that little room. In that moment, through the tiny windows of her little home she had looked out upon a kingdom which had no boundaries. The angel of God had crossed her threshold, and from that moment there were two human beings in the room. She was really the first Christian and the last Jewess. She was the first one to love Jesus, for she bore Him under her heart; and she was the first to experience the fellowship of His sufferings, for even her best friend lost faith in her for a time. And she was the goal of Israel. I have been told that there are certain rare and peculiar plants which after many years' growth bear a single

flower of exceedingly great beauty; then they die. For fifteen hundred years God had been cultivating and protecting the plant Israel; then behold, the white Mary-lily sprang forth. The saga of Israel was ended, for its goal had been reached, from whence the mother of Our Lord was to be born. The two women talked of these and of many other things, and they sang the first Christmas hymns for each other. I do not think that Jesus ever forgot John nor what John's home had meant to His young mother.

When John was born folks asked, "What will this child become?" That is what they say every time a child is born. A mother always thinks that there is not the like of her offspring in all the world, and she is right, for every child is unique and different from all others. But in this case there was reason for extraordinary expectation.

When John was still very young, his parents having already died, people might well have said, "What will become of this child now?" God educated him, and the desert received him. There it was that he grew to manhood.

The desert put its mark on him for life. He became a passionate lover of freedom. This love of freedom was later the cause of his spiritual fall; but it has ever been characteristic of that Kingdom of Heaven to which he opened the door, that freedom is loved there. "No price is too great—" so a woman

friend of mine used to say. "But it is often sold for a song," I used to add. No one could say that John was coddled in that school. Every schoolboy knows what he wore and ate; and later Jesus described him as one who neither swayed back and forth as reeds along the banks of Jordan, nor as one who went about in dainty, soft clothes as those at court do. Many of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, in later years, had many more unnecessary necessities than he required who was the greatest outside the Kingdom of Heaven. And then he had unbelievable courage. He had heard too often the roar of the wild beasts of the desert to be frightened by a fox in the cloak of a tetrarch. And out there in the wilds his religious life was indelibly stamped with decision for he had for the most part been alone with God and had not learned of men the art of treading softly.

Thus was he schooled and equipped when the call came from God.

Luke portrays the historical situation at the time when "the word of God came" to John, using expression from the prophetical books. It is as though one saw an outspread map of the world, as it was then known—with the word of God soaring high in the air like a bird of prey about to swoop down upon its quarry. Tiberius was then Emperor in Rome; he was the world's mightiest man—doubtless God's word would come to him. No, it did not come to him. Pilate was the governor of

Judea, the Eastern representative of the Emperor—but neither to him did the word come. Still it soars watchfully aloft in the blue sky seeking its instrument. Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, yet not to any of these did it come. But Annas and Caiaphas were high-priests, the highest representatives of the state church, with all of the insignia of the holy office they held—surely God's word would come to them. No; neither to them did it come. It came to the young son of Zacharias out there in the desert.

One cannot overestimate the importance of the moment when he appeared before Israel, and Israel never forgot it. Josephus the Jewish historian of the time of Titus has nothing to say of Jesus of Nazareth, but he tells of John the Baptist and the furore he caused. When Peter for the first time preached the gospel in the house of a heathen, he began by mentioning John. Mark, telling the life story of Jesus, commences thus: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," and the beginning is John.

There he stands, the personification of Advent, before the door, ringing the deep-throated bells that are to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven.

There were two sides to his preaching.

He proclaimed the imminence of judgment,

and said that all men should repent. There was a note as of blustering wild spring storms in his message, and a sound as of the wood-chopper's axe in the autumn forest. But when anguished souls came to ask: "What must we do?" he gave practical advice to them. He did not deliver impractical lectures on disarmament to the soldiers, but he said, "You must control yourselves—you must not plunder!" He did not say to the publicans, "Give up your earthly business and become lay preachers!" But he said: "From now on you must not defraud people." To royalty he did not say, "Your majesty is of course an exception," but he said: "The self-same rule of personal purity that must govern the others must govern you. It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." To the common people he did not say, "I did not mean that you should take it so literally!" but he said: "Share your clothes and food with those who have nothing." To the spiritual leaders of Israel he used the sternest words; he said: "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance." Doubtless he would have said to the ladies, "Never forget that your maids are as truly children from a home as are your own children." And to maids, "Do you work so faithfully that God's eyes may always rest with pleasure on it." To journalists he would have said, "Neither have ye the right to lie!" And what he would

have said to some of our politicians is quite impossible to guess.

But there was yet another string to his bow. He had always that which all true preachers ought to have—a vision of Jesus. He did not say merely: "Repent ye, for the fiends of Hell are at your heels!" but he said: "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" The wild storms of spring are the heralds of summer. Jesus is the summer sun, and John was the man who opened the gates leading into the land of this sunshine. And first he said, "He cometh!" And then **crescendo:** "He is there!" And then **fortissimo:** "There He is," as he points to the figure of Jesus.

And in truth there He was.

Jesus' years of waiting were at an end—He had reached the point when He had to be clear as to His calling and His hour. And He sought out him whom all at that time were seeking,—John.

He sought counsel of John as his young mother, years earlier, had sought counsel of the mother of John. And he found what he sought; but it was John who received most, just as Elizabeth had, when Mary came to her.

Often in later years John spoke of that meeting with Jesus. He would say, as though reproaching himself: "And I knew Him not—!" And he thought of himself when he

said to his contemporaries: "In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not."

This was when he had reached the zenith of his influence, and the best of the youth of Israel clung to him. He had taught them to pray; they fasted in the same manner as he.

But when He had come for whom John had waited, he bade them all farewell. Doubtless his gaze followed them wistfully as they left him; but he wanted them all to have the best, —which a true leader of youth always does— and he rejoiced when they chose Jesus as their Master.

When he had been asked who he was it had pleased him to answer: "A voice." This was true humility—he did not desire to be more. And yet he was fully conscious of his mission —he knew that he had a message—he knew in whose name he spoke. Many believed him to be the long-awaited prophet, but he said again and again, "No, I am not he!" Not that this is anything that particularly merits praise —that he did not claim to be the Messiah, for if he had done that, he would have been a mere deceiver. John's greatness was this— he was always glad to point to another, and to prepare the way for Him who was to come.

When he sang his swan-song, his greatness as a man was revealed as never before. For whether or not a man is truly great is seen at the moment of his fall, when he must relinquish his power to another. Then we see

whether the great desired to serve themselves or others. There is the most beautiful poetry in his words; more than that, there is the most manly, the purest humility,—not the emphemeral self-consuming spirit, but a most happy and genuine spirit of service, and the most willing acceptance of the situation: "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is made full."

The taper sheds light for others, but itself is consumed. All of us desire to shed light; do we wish to be consumed? Much that is called admiration is merely ill-concealed envy, and many who regret that something or other has happened are simply trying to disguise a feeling of satisfaction at another's misfortune. Even in those days there were officious souls who hurried in to say: "They are all running after this new prophet!" But John only answered sadly: "And no man receiveth his witness!"

Without being a Christian, John had reached the highest point possible for a human being. He had but one desire—not himself, but Christ.

II

Now if this had all been a drama, its poetry would have reached its climax here, and here

it should have ended. But it was reality, and the tragedy came.

John was cast into prison, and when he had sat there long enough, he fell to doubting.

The ruins of the fortress Machærus on its rocky height stands to this day,—a sorrowful monument for the last we know of the greatest one outside of the Kingdom of Heaven. Did he, too, end as a ruin?

The church fathers spoke of something they called **acedia,** which was one of the seven deadly sins. It happened, sometimes, that a monk, having sought peace in the cloister and having hidden himself away from all of this world's temptations behind these walls, would be overwhelmed by an irresistible feeling of weariness, a lack of interest in anything and everything. No longer did he care to work in his cabbage-patch—he could hardly get himself to tell his rosary. Everything bored him to death. The rich young Englishman experiences this—and he calls it **spleen.**

But it was not only this that came over John. He began to doubt that Jesus was the one He claimed to be. "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?"

It was not simply solitude that brought this on; he was used to solitude from his childhood and loved it. It is much more likely that it came because the man of the desert had lost his freedom. These confining walls and this life of idleness! For there is truly a world of difference between standing under God's

lofty blue heavens with a promising future ahead, and having to walk back and forth, back and forth like a caged beast of prey. If only he might die under the open heavens—that was all he asked.

Then, too, there was this—John was an Israelite—and an Israelite he remained to the last. And so it was natural for him to look upon this awful fate, this wasting away in a dungeon, dying at last a lonely painful death, as a sign that God had forsaken him and was taking His revenge. It is the story of Job over again. It could not but lead him straight into doubt and temptation—that condition where faith lies a-fevered and dreams in its delirium that God is angry. And worse than that, for John was not only tempted—the Israelite in him doubted Jesus. Was He after all the Messiah? If He was, why did He not seize His winnowing-fan and cleanse His threshing-floor, so that the whole generation of vipers with all abominations would be burned in the fire? Why was there no word of a Holy Spirit regenerating and transforming God's Israel? And why did not the Lord's Day come, with vengeance upon the enemies and victory for the true believers?

At any rate, regardless of what brought it on, it came—that barren, icy doubt.

Such a thing may, I suppose, be an inheritance. Had not the old priest also doubted once, just for a moment, even as he stood in the holy place itself, as he brought the offer-

ing of incense before the high-altar ot God? Is it so strange, then, that the son could become a doubter, as he languished month after month in a subterranean dungeon?

But it is an awful thing to doubt, whether we are standing before the altar or whether we are, so to speak, imprisoned in a dungeon.

O, if only one might have a couple of dependable friends,—and an upright heart! And John, poor as he was, possessed both.

It may also be painful to have friends when one is a doubter. Dared he tell them what he felt? Might he not be sowing the same seed in their hearts? Would he not cause that to totter which he himself had built?

But he found two whom he had once led away from himself as he pointed to Jesus. These he dared to tell, and these he sent to Jesus.

John is upright—he sends a message to Jesus. Doubters are always so ready to doubt concerning their faith, with never a doubt concerning their doubts. They are so willing to read all the atheistic books they can lay their hands on, and to listen to all the contrary thoughts, but they will not hear a word of what faith itself has to say. But John sent messengers to Jesus, asking, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?"

The answer he got contains three-fold aid.

"Go and tell John the things . . . ye . . . see!" According to the account in Luke they had seen Jesus awaken the dead youth before the

gates of Nain. "Go and tell John what you have just seen—that the blind see, and that even the dead are raised! Ye shall be his eyes, now that he can no longer see these things himself. Ye shall be a light for him, now that he is sitting in darkness."

This is a great truth. Christians can go to the doubter and bring him light through their sure faith and joyous testimony.

Now notice that all they were to tell him was something he had heard before. He knew it all. But now he was to be reminded of it all. If he has been stricken dumb, just as his father once had been, his memories should be given the power of speech. For memories have often so spoken to a doubter that faith awoke, both before John's time and after. The man who wrote the forty-second psalm had just such an experience. It is so plain to see how this psalm has come into being in a deeply troubled soul. He is a poor Israelitish prisoner who, as he is being taken into exile, rests for a last brief moment upon the soil of his homeland, and with tear-filled eyes, bids farewell to his beloved country. The little waterfalls in the neighborhood of Jordan's source, at the foot of Hermon, foam and roar as they rush past the spot upon which he stands, but greater is the seething and roaring in the depths of his troubled soul. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth

my soul after thee, O God." Then it is that this harried man takes refuge in the treasury of his memories and comforts his restless soul by reviving the blessed moments of his past: "These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me how I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holy day." It is for this that we have our memories.

But the greatest help Jesus sent lay in one single word—the last, which was like a little personal greeting. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."

"John—me! Was it not once so between us, that we had complete confidence in each other? It is I, Jesus, who greets you; do you no longer believe me? That glorious day, down there in the Jordan, when you knew me and believed me,—is it possible that many dark days in prison can change that day? I am still the same."

For so it is—faith in the last analysis is a purely personal thing—there is no other way for the doubter.

Did he accept the help, then? Alas, we know not. The truthful Scriptures do not tell us of repentance or victory; they are silent. For him there is hope, for God has a way for the pious of Israel, and of these he was the greatest. We know nothing as to the other doubters. Their fate is a locked room in our soul, into which we shall not enter until the

time when we shall speak to Jesus face to face.

III

He left behind him a glorious name.

Jesus said of him: "He was the lamp that burneth and shineth; and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light."

The disciple John writes this splendid, pithy epitaph: "There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John." It was thus they later thought of him: he was sent to us from God, when we were young.

Jesus Himself had experienced a remarkable thing. Toward the end of His activity, when the Jews had wanted to stone Him, He withdrew to a secluded place beyond the Jordan —to the very spot where John had once baptized. And many of the people came to Him there and said, "John indeed did no sign: but all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true." And, so we read, "many believed on him there."

Jesus saw but a scant harvest during His life on earth. There were no great visible results, great awakenings seldom took place, and it was but a little group that followed Him at the last. But it was here that He finally reaped the richest harvest—where His poor friend had sown.

Never say, then, that a work is in vain, or a testimony, or a prayer for someone. You may never see the fruits, but they will surely come in their own time.

IV

Thus did the figure of John dominate the whole scene at the time Jesus appeared before the people.

But this was not due to mere chance. He himself knew and to the very last those who were about him clung to this. He had been sent out by God to meet them. But the question now is really this: Was John only a single link in the divine plan, which concerned only those of his own time, or does he not rather symbolize a principle, a law, which constantly repeats itself in God's dispensation? Was it only that generation, those contemporary with Jesus, that needed a John, or does he not concern us all? If the latter is true, the figure of John means, in a word, the time of preparation in a human life.

God makes preparation for all that He does.

This is the true viewpoint from which to look at Israel and its history: a time of preparation, a period of education. This must always be borne in mind when we study the Scriptures of the old covenant. There are only too few Christians who are at home in their Old Testament, and the Lutheran Church is itself much to blame in this regard—it never really understood how to gain the interest of its children for this book which, nevertheless, was Jesus' Bible. Altogether too many Christians in my country are satisfied to show their love for Moses and the prophets by attacking as heretics the Bibli-

cal critics, while they, themselves, do not study the writings of the prophets nearly so closely as their opponents do. The Christians of an earlier age did very differently. The defenders of Christianity in the days of martyrdom never tired of pointing to the Messianic prophecies and their marvellous fulfillment as one of the surest proofs of the truth of Christianity. And this is truly a miracle of lasting value.

But it is not only in Israel that this preparation time, this period of education occurs. Just such periods are found in the history of the entire human race. They may be discerned in both ancient and modern heathenism. It may look as though the nations were completely forgotten and left to themselves in their straying. Their names were given in chapter ten of Genesis; but in the eleventh it is as though a heavy door clanged shut behind them all, and while they are but dimly seen, groping about in a constantly increasing darkness, God makes, as it were, a new beginning in the twelfth chapter by calling out that one individual, Abraham. But this simply means that God lays His own plans and carries them out in orderly fashion. His eyes are on them all, but like all good educators, He is not afraid to take time. And soon they are mentioned again: "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The singular phenomenon of Melchizedek; that blended, enigmatic character, Balaam; the

wise men from the East who come from a far country to worship the royal child—do these not all show that God also holds in His hand the threads of heathen destiny? Paul's vision was the same. In man's conscience he sees God's preparation in all heathen souls—a Johannine voice which is never quite silent. It speaks even today. All ethical laws, all morals, are but the voice of John preparing the way for religion. Religion is as a prolongation of this. Without religion morals would end in shipwreck, like the Baptist in prison—they would lack a foundation, they would have no power. Morals are like the cat, which chases its own tail. Without morals religion would be without roots. I say religion, meaning simply Christianity, for that is **the religion**; and I would no more adduce proof for this statement than would the sun attempt to prove that it shines brighter than the moon and all the stars; for this is self evident.

This same Johannine principle that is dominant in the history of Israel and heathenism is also to be found in the lives of individuals. Always we shall find God's preparation, His education-period, and this is most easily to be seen in the lives of the great, whom God wishes to use for some special work.

The man He has chosen to be a reformer and leader is educated in the very court of the pharaoh of Egypt, the nation which had reached the highest cultural development of

that day. And when he stands thus equipped from his very youth, abreast of the learning of the time, one thing only is lacking—the education and preparation of the spirit. And so God leads him out into desert places, and during these long years he makes the hot-tempered youth the meekest of men. Then the hour comes when Moses may forsake his flocks in order to shepherd Israel.

And the man who is to bring the gospel out into the heathen world and put his impress upon the thoughts of the church for all time is born of good Israelitish stock but with citizenship in the world-kingdom, in a Greek-speaking city of culture; in his youth he gains a seat at the feet of Gamaliel, the best of rabbis, and sees the first blood-witness die. Thus does God prepare Saul to become Paul.

And the thing we see in the great we find also in ourselves, the small folk in God's kingdom. It is a most useful and edifying business to pay attention to God's work of preparation in our own lives. Much of that which happens to us and to others can be endured only if seen from the viewpoint of divine education, the preparation of grace.

There are certain clear lines which we must trace away back to God's eternal counsel. The thought of predestination and eternal election are not much to the fore in our times, but the greatest religious spirits—Jeremiah, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin—went all the way back to the eternal depth of grace and an-

chored there, and did not crush their heads on that rock, but rested in safety only when they had gone so far back.

Also here in this life we shall often meet that educating hand—right from the years of childhood, through the years of youth, and far along into the life of every man. The first and greatest Johannine work is done by the home. Later there are many other things that influence and stimulate us. The lightning, which killed the friend of young Luther; the message which came to the ears of young Ansgar that Charlemagne was dead; the picture of the Savior with its questioning inscription, "What hast thou done for me?" which burned itself into the soul of young Zinzendorff—it is all John. The hours in the catechetical class; the noble and wide-awake comrade who urged us on; the inspiring book which fell into our hands at just the right moment; the dangerous illness and the crisis safely passed; a passing question that kept recurring to us; the sleepless nights in our later years—John, John.

He is everywhere. We ought really to be able to hear his voice in nature. Ancient Israel had begun to see him there. You will find it in the Hymn to the Night Heavens (Psalm 8), or the Song of Praise to the Day Heavens (Psalm 19), or that grand Nature Psalm (104), or the little Hallelujah Psalms, where the trees sing and the rivers clap their hands (96 and 98), or the Psalm of Thunder

(29), where we see the storm marching across the heavens from north to south, splitting the venerable cedars. (I remember to this day the impression this psalm made upon us as we sat, a group of youths, in an open barn-door and read it while a glorious summer storm thundered past, soaking the grass and cooling the air.) Even the heathen are able to read the writing of God's finger upon the star-sown heavens and hear His speech in the sighing of the forests (Romans 1:19; Acts 14:17). And that which these folk could only guess at, we who have studied our lesson at home should each day be able to go out and find for ourselves. I know that natural science, in our day, has made it hard for us to find God in nature—and Christian opposition to science has perhaps played its part also. The former looks only for inexorable laws and struggling powers, a great, merciless machine, which crushes all that is weak; and the latter, in her fear of the new, has made all too few attempts to see if there was not a truth in it all which would perhaps make God's wisdom and power in nature still more beautiful and great than ever before. And so it is that now most people cannot see the woods for the trees, nor the Creator for His laws. Perhaps it does take a fine ear to hear the Johannine voice in mute nature. But what of the world of men and women — surely there we have met him? Surely we have heard the footsteps of the Almighty in history and the progress of genera-

tions? Alas, we have heard but little. The prophets of Israel, indeed, had eyes as sharp as the eagle's, that enabled them to discern God's hand down through the years; truly they had the historical sense, and this alone makes books like Ezekiel, Amos, and Habakkuk rich in instruction. They had their eyes open and paid close attention to what was happening in the great world beyond their own country, and knew that God was also the God of the nations; that was how they dared to believe that Israel whose land was no larger than Jutland and whose people had been in exile seventy years, would one day return home, when the great kingdoms of earth should go down in ruin. All this they lived to see. And Paul, too, saw the finger of God in history, and pointed it out in his master-sermon on Mars Hill. But how about ourselves? When the writing of history was in the hands of men who were friendly to the church, they gave us only the stories of kings and wars, dates and names in plenty, but nothing that would lead our thoughts toward a guiding hand. And now the writing of history is in the hands of prejudiced enemies of Christianity, who devote but a line to the telling of Jesus' birth in the reign of Caesar Augustus; and modern history is in many cases being written by journalists who have neither religion nor morals. The story of the human race, as well as everything else, must be made to show evolution; the swarming

masses obliterate the footprints of the Almighty; where is He, whilst we starve, and bleed, and fight, and die?

But each individual also has his own little history. In the daily grind of the commonplace, God meets man, especially when the wheel stands still once in a while and the great events in a human life occur—then it is that John's warning voice is heard counseling us to think a bit and either thank God or send a prayer up to Him in haste. For is it not true that when the angel of death swept through your home upon black, noiseless wings, when you stood watching the beads of perspiration appear upon that pale brow, when you and the other children, now grown, met again in your old childhood home, called thither by telegraph; when you anxiously listened to the throaty rattle and later tiptoed in to look upon the oddly strange, waxen-yellow face with that maidenly smile—how pitifully small that face had become!—and when the worst moment of all had come, when the coffin was borne out through the hall-door (for we first realize that all is over when we see that they may not longer remain even in their own house)—is it not true that when all these little incidents that death brings occurred in your life, your thoughts glided out into the infinite and inquired after a God and a hope; and then you promised not only that you would be kind to those dear ones who

were spared you, and faithful to the memory of the departed, but this resolve went through your soul: "I will seek God more earnestly from now on." Perhaps it was so—perhaps not. For also I, who call myself a Christian, have felt when I stood looking upon death's work of destruction, that I must take good care that none of my faith should ooze out through some invisible fissure and be lost in the relentless past. "A corpse is an incomprehensible thing"; says Johannes Fibiger, "if one but looks at it for a little while, one thinks the features are moving, and one trembles the more when one sees that it is but a delusion. . . . It is enough to cause one to lose both his mind and his faith." I understand what he means. It was a great thing when Abraham could believe, hoping against hope, disregarding the advanced age of Sarah; it is also a great thing when we can retain our faith though we see death's ravaging progress, hour by hour; and even the Son of man burst into sobs when He saw it. But God be praised, when some little time has passed and the grass begins to cover the mound out yonder, and the damask roses are soon to be in bloom, it seems to me that it is not only the memories that are allowed to speak mildly to me, but also my stricken hope awakens again and smiles through the tears. The freethinkers, with Niels Lyhne at their head, are never tired of relating that it was the death of their loved ones which first really locked the door of

heaven against them and put an end to relations between themselves and the Lord.

Yes, but they forget to add that what death could not do, life itself often can do—life, that wonderful phenomenon, always joyous, that appeared and asked for our kindness. More than once have we seen this, that freethinkers, little malcontent seekers after a master's degree, with their lorgnettes and tightly-cropped Van Dykes, fiery artists, working men who despised all ministers of the gospel most cordially, came nevertheless with their new-born babe and wanted "it" baptized. What does this mean? Why, to be sure, it was life, God's lovely gift to our race which now had also been given them; such a little one lying so rosy-pink and tiny, babbling behind its white curtains, is a little holy being, which has been suddenly entrusted to them; and their hearts have become so stirred and filled with thanks about it all.

Thus did the Johannine voice speak to us, now through the stern angel of death, now through the smile of a little child; but, to be sure, it was often only a passing visit, a feeling, and no more. One gets used to a loss; and one tires of the whimpering of children.

But often men receive abiding impressions of God as a living reality when they meet living Christians upon their way, men and women in whom God unmistakably lives. This is not easily forgotten, and for the most part, though often very late, it brings its fruit.

I once heard of a distinguished old gentleman who strongly opposed all religion, into whose home at one time had come an elderly woman, a simple soul, distantly related to him. She was a believing Christian who did not try to hide her faith. Many years afterward—she had long been dead and buried—the old gentleman lay at the point of death; and his troubled thoughts busied themselves with the matter of the life to come and the day of reckoning before God. Then he was heard to say several times, "If I but had the faith she had." It was that poor simple relative who lived again in his memory and bore witness to him through her quiet example.

One of our pastors has also related to me the following. A cultured gentleman lay sick. His wife, a churchgoer, asked the pastor to visit and talk with him. The sick man, however, in several conversations, proved to be entirely unreceptive toward the pastor's effort—without faith in anything. Then, one evening a few days before Christmas—a thin layer of snow covered the streets—the pastor suddenly felt impelled to pay the sick man another visit. In the course of the conversation he asked this question: "Think back and tell me—have you never in your life come across Christianity in such a form that you had the feeling a reality lay back of it?" "No," said the man; but a moment afterward he added—"well yes, now that you mention it—when I was very young and green, at Sorø

Academy—I must have been in the highest class—we had a teacher in religion who really was a personality; he was gripped by the thing he spoke of; and we were with him to a man." When later I learned that this teacher of religion was the renowned Rudolf Frimodt, the first pastor of St. John's Church, I understood. Here at last the pastor had found a point of contact. That which was begun so long ago really revived. The last time the pastor came up and rang the bell, the wife met him at the door and said, "Go right in to my husband's room; he has been longing so to talk with you. A great change has come over him." It proved that he had had a sort of vision in which God spoke to him; and he died believing in his Savior.

John had come, in the person of that teacher, and had prepared the way by his word and example.

V

There are times when such an individual, such a great John-like character appears, and beckoning to a whole generation, comes to mean much to many. Such a one was Søren Kirkegaard (yes, you were, Søren, though you are offended at it; we know better). And not less, Grundtvig; let those who cannot see it in his own character look at him with the grateful loving eyes of his friend Gunii Busch, and they will learn to say with him, "God bless Grundtvig! God bless him! May the Holy

Spirit preserve him!" They were rich in those days.

O, that a John would arise among us and let his voice resound! A prophetic voice in our university—one which should lead listening youth to the springs and to the spring of springs; one such a Schelling must have been in his first period, or Henrik Steffens when he gave his first lecture at Ehlers' Kollegium, or young Professor Martensen—they said that the students often forgot to write when he lectured, listening breathless and absorbed; for the Dove of the Spirit flew low through the auditorium, just above the heads of youth.

O that we had more than one John in our pulpits!

Yes—and a John among our poets! One who will wake the dawn. One who will call upon us and rouse our youth and cleanse our poetic stables—ugh, how such a cleansing is needed!—a young Bjørnson who would not cast away in later life the keys to the holy mysteries; vigorous as he, noble as Carlyle, with Johannes V. Jensen's sense of smell!

They will come when the Spirit wills it, these great sowers, spreading their golden seed in thousands of hearts; they grow to manhood in this or that secluded place, nor can we artfully hatch them out or conjure them up—but the church has not yet tried what may be done by praying to God that they may come.

And until the day of their coming each

must perforce be content with his own quiet John, as he comes to us upon our life's way. I thank Jakob Paulli,* who even in the very first hour of catechetics, spoke so of the Kingdom of Heaven that I knew it was a reality; and I bless J. C. Heuch† and his collection of sermons, which in right earnest taught me that we have a living Savior. And you, too, must thank those to whom you know yourself indebted—your John.

I say to you: Despise not the time of preparation! Not even when its purpose has been accomplished. Say not of that servant of God who was His instrument for your awakening, "He hasn't the true faith, after all!" And do not say of that movement which you can thank for your calling, "They do not, after all, take things seriously enough!" But thank your John and pray for him!

Not that you are to remain in the period of preparation! John is the greatest among them that are born of women—but he that is but little in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he! He baptized only with water—the one who shall come after him will baptize with the fire of the Holy Spirt. There is a human, a preparatory side to Christianity—but the decisive thing in Christianity is the new and wonderful life in God, that which came into the world that first Christmas Eve, and became the gift to all, also to those who were

*Dean at Copenhagen's Cathedral. Died 1915.
†A Norwegian Bishop and prominent preacher.

afar off on that first Pentecost. John is but an Advent figure who stands or falls for his Lord alone, and in the last analysis must give account to God only for his own soul. He did what he could to show you the way to Christ; you alone know whether you found Him and went to Him.

CHAPTER II

Jesus at Twelve, and Spiritual Awakening* in the Very Young

I

I SHALL not begin by telling Christmas stories. Not that I could not; but because Jesus Himself never referred to His birth. As a matter of fact, centuries had passed before the church began to celebrate the festival we call Christmas. Up to that time the fact of the resurrection overshadowed, or rather outshone the mystery of Christmas. To be sure, I am convinced that if none of us knew the story of the Christmas-gospel, but had learned through a sincere personal effort to know the person and thoughts of Jesus Christ, we should reach about the same result as Luke with regard to His entrance into this world, or at least to something very like his account. I have myself tried, at one time, to improve upon Luke, and I can assure you that it is very difficult. Now I do not for a moment believe that the links in the Christian Creed are like the chain that supports a lamp, so

*It seems impossible to translate adequately the Danish word "Gennembrud." This expression, which means "a bursting forth" or a "breaking through," as of a seed breaking through the mould, is often used to describe the spiritual experience of those who have not strayed away from their baptismal pact, when they consciously begin to live their life in communion with God. Usually, when the term spiritual awakening is used in this chapter, it represents the Danish expression "aandeligt Gennembrud."

that if one single link should fall out the whole lamp would fall with a crash and be extinguished. One may, so to speak, peel many a ray from the star, yet it shines nevertheless; nor are we to be given an examination in dogmatics upon the day of judgment—so far as I have been able to learn. And yet the truth requires that I mention this fact—during recent years I have had to do with at least three able students whose whole religious life was in a state of confusion because they had begun to doubt the authenticity of the childhood-gospel and the truth of the virgin birth. When the root is cut away the tree withers. But the tree may flourish though we do not examine the roots—in fact it always grows best when the roots are left alone. As has been said, Christ Himself never mentioned His earthly origin, and we shall here consider only the tree itself—that Life which lies open to everyone who wills to study it, and through which also we can best know and understand our own life.

It is Luke, the historian among the four evangelists, who has preserved the childhood-gospel for us, both the Christmas story itself and that matchless scene in the temple at Jerusalem, when Jesus was twelve years old. I have reason to believe that the painstaking historian (his avowed purpose, you will remember, was to trace the course of all things accurately from the first) had gotten his in-

formation from the child's mother, or at least from her most intimate circle of friends or relatives. There are certain little half-parenthetical clauses—and parenthetic remarks should always be closely observed—which would point in that direction. I am thinking of those apparently subordinated little remarks concerning the young mother's thoughts and reflections ("Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart—marvelling at the things which were spoken concerning him—and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." Luke 2:19, 33, 51), which would indicate that the events are related as they have been reflected in her consciousness and memory.

The readers doubtless remember the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, but if the details should be forgotten, I would suggest that they read it through (it is found in Luke 2:40-52) before they read this little account, in order rightly to understand it.

There will doubtless be varying opinions as to what took place, psychologically speaking, in the boy's soul life; and this variety of opinion will depend entirely upon one's view of the "god-man."

There are theologians who believe that the child Jesus, lying in the manger-straw on Christmas Eve, was at that very moment conscious of the fact that He was one of the three persons in the holy Trinity.

For others this is unthinkable. We believe that when the Logos ("the Word") became flesh, His consciousness of being God was extinguished, because He Himself had determined that it should be so. His becoming man was a very real and serious thing, completely carried out; so that it was a real little human child that lay there in the manger and caused a young mother to forget all her trouble and sorrow. He may well have been a most beautiful little child (as the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews pictures Moses), with eyes that shone like stars, completely free from the heavy inheritance that we others were born with—because the good Spirit of God had guarded that holy life from its very first heart-beat. Nevertheless, that tiny child of the King lay there in His poverty and knew no more than we—unless, indeed, His eyes looked about in the grotto and saw the white angels who encircled the manger and crowded the door, which none of the grown people were able now, to see.

Then, as the child grew older, that God-consciousness began to dawn, only half-consciously as vague memories: Was it something He had dreamed or had His mother told Him of it before, or had He Himself, once upon a time—? And in the evening, when the lad stood looking out over the mountains of Galilee, He would feel yet more clearly than we, that He had His home in that land where the sun never sets.

And at His visit to the temple in Jerusalem this mysterious, sub-conscious life has thus burst forth into a new and independent clarity of understanding—not indeed completely developed, but like a fresh spring whose flow steadily increases, until finally in the youth's thirtieth year, it burst forth in full consciousness of His true Native Land as well as of His call.

If we are right in this conception, it is obvious that there are incidents in the phenomena of His development that are entirely unique and outside of all other human experience—incidents that undoubtedly cast important light upon the person of the Savior, but upon which it would never do to build universally applicable laws for the understanding of human psychology. Nevertheless, just as truly as Jesus in all earnestness became a real human being, just as surely as we are truly related to God (Acts 17:29), just so surely shall we find, in the boy Jesus and in His awakening many very informative parallels to that which takes place at the same age (or here in the north a few years later), in every normal young person.

We shall try, then, to discover the elements in this early awakening; next, certain traits which commonly characterize it; and finally those circumstances or conditions which usually precede and follow the awakening.

II

Now what did this experience consist of which came to the twelve-year-old lad that day in Jerusalem's temple? What were the thoughts that were occupying Him when this new experience burst forth in His soul?

Fortunately we are not obliged to depend upon pure guess work here. He has Himself given expression to these thoughts. We have, it is true, only one brief utterance from His lips, but if we listen attentively, noticing not only the contents but also the tone of voice that must have been used, we shall find enough to enable us to form an idea of the whole incident; nor shall we lay ourselves open to the charge of having pressed a meaning into the words, nor of having put something into the text instead of having drawn something out of it.

Jesus met His anxious parents with these words: "Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

These words throw light over the whole incident. I find at least three essential elements of the phenomenon of spiritual awakening expressed in this single, significant speech.

"Knew ye —?" That is to say, to Him it seemed perfectly natural that they should know. "It is certainly strange that **you** did not know—there is surely nothing remarkable about what I have done—" such is obviously the thought. Here is no nervous irritability,

nothing imitative or forced, no spiritual violence, no unsound precocity. It is said in such guileless simplicity, so upright and childlike, so truly boy-like, so refreshing. They are a little astonished; but it has not astonished Him at all.

The second important element lies in the two words, "my Father." In one sense this is something entirely unique. Not that men had never before thought of calling God by this name. Our fathers' God, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,—doubtless that is what the god-fearing men and women in Israel would usually say, and thus would they think of Him; nor would this be anything new for the most devout boy in Israel. The individual Israelite would sometimes call God by the name of Father; but if he were asked what right he had to do this, it would simply be that he belonged to the people of the covenant. But "my Father," as He says it, in that age and in that place—this points to an entirely personal experience. In that boyish soul, very, very quietly, the greatest possible advance in the religious world was made: he is resting in confident faith in God and calls Him His Father. He feels at home here in God's temple. He has found a connection here with God, which He has not thus known before,—and He has found it Himself, unaided.

And finally this third element: "I must be about my Father's business"—in that which

belongs to my Father. This shows us the ethical gain which His experience has brought Him. That trusting relationship, is at the same time a precious obligation. It has challenged His will, and He has said "yes" with His whole heart. This is not merely pious, child-like emotion—everything will look different from now on. In a word, now I am in dead earnest.

III

Now the very self-same elements will be found in the spiritual awakening of every young person in our own country.

And first of all let us note this—that it is something so entirely natural.

O, if I could but establish this fact! **Everything** awakens in these years of youth—all the powers of the soul are awakening; what then is more natural than that the holiest and deepest of all our feelings should be seen unfolding itself?

The critical faculty awakens. Who indeed is able to face the criticism of these fifteen-year-old gentlemen? Not even their own parents are equal to the situation. I have myself seen the sincere suffering experienced by a young German Jew when he discovered that the father he had deified was a great egoist who would not even fetch his own morning slippers; and that the mother he had worshipped was a woman of foolish prejudices. Fortunately there are some who discover in

their parents beautiful traits which they did not notice as children. "Father has worked so hard for us all, and so-and-so has done him a great injustice, but through it all he has never lost his good humor." "And mother is really not at all well; her nerves are always on edge but she keeps everything going just the same."

The feeling of independence asserts itself everywhere. The youth insists on choosing his own clothes, and his mother is hardly permitted to brush a speck from his coat or to straighten his necktie if it chances to be a bit crooked. He prefers to hold opinions directly opposed to those of his parents, both as regards politics and religion—simply that he may be himself. School discipline is intolerable. "If only I were in college!" I wrote along the margin of **Iversen's** "Latin Exercises" (a horrible little book). Let it be said for the comfort of teachers of religion, when the older pupils seem to be inattentive, that this is to a certain extent done in self-defense—they want to be themselves, also in things pertaining to religion, and are afraid of being considered immature, but they are not nearly so irreligious as they seem. There is, of course, the possibility that the teacher himself is tiresome, in which case he had best improve or take up a profession for which he is better fitted.

Youth has a thousand yearnings that keep unfolding. What is it they long for? How should I know? To be grownup, more than

anything else; to get away from their surroundings; to have some new experience; to die (this desire does not last long); to revolutionize society; to be cared for; to find a real friend; to become famous (this is especially true of young Japanese)—and many, many other things! What, pray, is it that we half-old fellows long for every time spring comes round with its delightful poignancy?

Interest in the other sex begins to manifest itself, often in a rather ludicrous fashion, and again in the most delicate and charming way. It will be difficult to choose a certain one, when the time comes, is the thought of many; they are fiery admirers of three or four at the same time, and when the choice finally was made who could guarantee that a new beauty would not pass by the very next day, far more wonderful than all the others? "She must look like mother did when she was young," is the requirement of one. "We shall merely be good friends, and talk sensibly about everything—but do you think that is right?" asks another.

Appreciation of the beauty of nature appears. The flaming western skies and the setting sun have many new friends. One has his reading-nook, his place for meditation where earlier he built his hut or Indian wigwam.

Why then should not the holiest and noblest faculty of the soul come to the fore? Should all the other powers of the soul freely be permitted to unfold, while this alone, the longing to be good, to worship, the experiencing of

God, is denied its natural right? I venture the opposite position. If that one of the soul's faculties is repressed the youth's development is abnormal, pointing to a crippled and unsound growth. Let this be established: A religious awakening in the years of adolescence is an absolutely natural thing. I have known this for a long time. The psychology of religion, which is fast becoming a science in America, and which has already reached us through translations, establishes it: fifteen is the average age for this spiritual awakening.*

The most beautiful temple I have visited, up to the present day, the place where I have seen the greatest number of very young persons make their religious discoveries in the most natural and most fitting way, is the boys' camp at **Jaegerspris.** We saw so many things happen to forty youngsters in six days that it seems easier to understand how the Creator was able to create so much in that length of time. They took long hikes, and held mighty athletic-meets, and had gigantic appetites; that was the beginning. And then, half-unnoticed, some began to realize their country's beauty; others saw its reflection in their country's poetry and beautiful songs; lads from all classes of society became friends, and helped file away each other's little peculiarities and spoke never an ill word to each other; and their flag became more precious to them, as it

*James: The Psychology of Religious Experience.
Coe: The Religious Life.

rippled in the breeze overhead whilst they sang. But over it all was the vaulted heaven of God, and there were times when God's Word was spoken, very simply and directly at morning and evening devotions, when the leaders found opportunities for sensible, brotherly talks, individual to individual. I know of some who listened as they had never listened before. And when such a group turned homeward, and we saw the squared shoulders of the boys disappear among the hills, we knew that more than one went home to be a better boy from now on. We would not manufacture boy-conversions that should later be regretted; but we did desire most heartily to teach them to go to God themselves, and how well this succeeded I shall not attempt to say, but I shall let the boys speak for themselves—they have their own peculiar expressions.

These are extracts from letters written by older boys:

"How one feels the nearness of heaven here —it is as if one had only to stand on tiptoe to look right in."

"I pray God that it may be noticed in me for a long time, that I have been at the summer camp."

"It was there I found myself, saw how I ought to be, and made the decision which I have since tried to follow."

"My earliest memories of a life with God are

all from those days." (And that means quite a good deal, doesn't it?)

"You may be sure that I have made up my mind that many things shall be different, and I know I shall succeed for I have God with me, and He heard me make the decision."

"I am sure that our summer camp will be like a big, shining star, as long as there is a spiritual heaven above me."

This is beautiful, and truly natural. "But it is only a beginning," says the man of experience. As if I did not know that. Of course I know that it is only a beginning—but it is an exceedingly beautiful beginning.

* * *

We found that complete, childlike trust in God was the second element in the spiritual awakening of Jesus at the age of twelve.

I find it to be the same to this very day. The reader will pardon me for making a short personal reference; the case is important enough to warrant it. It was exactly so in my case.

It began with a little evening verse that I had heard others use. Later I added a sort of universal good-night greeting of my own manufacture which I thought exceedingly fitting. It ran like this:

"Good-night, sleep well, have pleasant dreams, everybody, everything, everywhere; thanks for to-day," and was said aloud. Later I discovered that an older brother had already learned the Lord's Prayer at school, and it at

once became my ambition to learn that. So I secretly got hold of his catechism and found the prayers, which were printed with heavy black type. Now there was one page which always fell out of the catechism; and that page, unfortunately, was one on which part of the prayer was printed. Thus I had, for the time being, only five petitions in my version of the Lord's Prayer, but I got along quite well, nevertheless. For a few years this evening recitation served, uttered with all of a child's absolute faith in Our Lord, concerning whom one had read a great deal in school, and whose name was always printed in italics in Hans Andersen's wonder stories; who lived—that was our common belief—high up beyond the clouds.

What a change, when the awakening came —when the youth himself gained a personal faith in God and experienced with the deepest satisfaction the comforting fact that one dared pray to Him in one's own words and under all conditions, and that He really heard and fulfilled one's requests! There are many things in religion which are a closed book, entirely strange to youth in that age; and there are those who have, at times, an unmanageable desire to be rattling such doors as eternal hell, God's foreknowledge, the Book of Revelation, etc.; but there is one thing a youth can do at once: he can pray. And this, after all, is one of the elements of Christianity, and is based upon a childlike confidence that God has just

as good intentions toward me as my own father has, and will listen to my prayers. Perhaps the prayer concerns a good mark in an examination—never mind, the mother of Jesus prayed for wine for the wedding at Cana. There will soon be more serious things to ask for, but if one did not have faith in God as one's father, how would he dare to come back and ask again and again for the same thing?

Blessed state of unconcern which is vouchsafed them who have just learned that God is their Father. I said unconcern; that was what I myself experienced, and how, pray, should we have been able to go through the meaningless Chinese puzzle they called examination without a certain amount of unconcern? But this was the first piece of gospel I learned, and for that matter I have never since forgotten it: "Be not anxious!" And I shall never be tired of passing this teaching on to others.

But there was still a third element: "I must be about my Father's business," i. e., it will not do to continue to live as I have lived until now. Things will have to be done differently now. Now I am in earnest, first of all with regard to myself; the youth is resolved to be good, now, and pure. It shall be known that now he is serving God in everything: "I must be about my Father's business." It must be seen at school: a Christian boy knows his lessons (as a rule!). It must be seen in my daily

work: "I have to-day done my work with joy, which is something that I have seldom experienced before," wrote a young cabinet-maker's apprentice to me during the week following his awakening. It must be seen at home: "I am going to be a good boy from now on."

For this is true: one comes to God just as one is—but, in order that one may never be the same again.

Such, in its essentials, is the religious awakening to this day, in every young person who experiences it.

IV

There are, as a rule, certain accompanying characteristics in the spiritual awakening which we can observe to a certain extent in the youth Jesus.

"How is it that ye sought me?" This is the language of a good conscience. His parents have been exceedingly anxious about Him, and when finally they find the lad, the mother purposes to deliver a severe lecture: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." But how completely is not every rebuke silenced, when faced by this good and perfect conscience! There is here no thought of excuses nor evasions, which are commonly so ready for use when we are discovered in an unusual place: "I didn't know you were waiting. I forgot all about it; I thought I could get there in time—." No, this youth's answer is right to

the point, just as things are—and so it ought to be.

And again: "They were astonished," says the account, when they saw Him there, and they were silent when He had done speaking. Why? Is it not that they have noted a change? Is there not a stamp of nobility on Him that they have not previously known? Something has happened to their boy—that is plain. He is growing away from them.

These characteristics will still, though much less markedly than in Him, follow the spiritual awakening of our own youth.

All who have experienced it will remember how happy they were in the early days, how easy it was to be good. In the beginning the new life was so strong that evil was checked and it was hardly necessary to make a fight against it. Here we see no actions open to suspicion, no walking about without speaking to others, grumbling and contrary. "It is so easy to be good," writes one of the youngest boys who had just come home from the summer camp. "Father and mother say that we are much better boys than we were before." We shall touch upon this phenomenon in more detail a little later.

And a change will be noted—if not right away, then as time goes on, if the experience was genuine. "Mother, now I have given my heart to Jesus," said a lad in one of our cities, and stretched out both his arms toward her, when she came into his little room. This is

not just the sort of stories I like best, although I know that it is true; but the expression was really not his own. Not many will come and tell of their experience; but an observant mother will not fail to discover it before very long. His favorite book, a desire to go to church or young people's meeting—these will betray him, if the change in his whole attitude does not itself make it plain. "But why didn't you tell us about it before; surely you knew how happy it would make us," said one mother, when she learned that her boy had for a good while been consciously living his own life for God. The answer was characteristic for a real boy: "I wanted to see if it really would last."

But at this point we must add a third characteristic not found in the case of Jesus, for the very reason that He was Jesus. The words are to be found in our account, but in an entirely different connection. "We sought thee sorrowing," said His mother. All of the sorrow on this occasion was experienced by His parents, who had not looked after Him as faithfully as they ought to have done, and who had not guessed at once that they would find Him here in the Temple—He had no feeling of sorrow. Not so, however, in our experience. Spiritual awakening seldom takes place in the case of our young people without sorrow. Consciousness of sin awakens turbulently, and often many tears are shed during the time of awakening.

Central Bible College Lib

Here there is need for wisdom. I am speaking now of the very young—and if they themselves should chance upon this book, they shall find me speaking as I have so often done.

* * *

Tell me how things are with you.

It seems to you that you are so cold, spiritually, you get nothing from prayer, it was so much better the time you were in the catechetical class and had just joined the Y.M.C.A. You are not at all zealous now, you yield much more easily to your temptations—God does not want anything to do with such a one as you.

Listen. At your age Christianity is nothing other than a good gift from God, and His intentions in offering it to you are the very best —never lose sight of this for a moment. You must not become still more melancholy because you have begun to have something to do with God. All that is depressing comes from yourself, and you must not blame God for any of it; quite the contrary: you must accept help from Him in order to become happier and stronger.

As a matter of fact, I can assure you that He knows you through and through. You must not imagine that Jesus is sitting up in Heaven thinking such thoughts as these: "Just see what a disappointment John has been to me—I thought I had gained such an excellent young disciple in him, and instead of that he causes me so much shame and sorrow—

that was certainly something I had not expected." No, indeed—He knew that it had to come. Do you think that a revolution takes place without something or other being lost? But there will never be a greater earthquake in a human soul than that which takes place in boys of your age. Why, everything in you is growing and changing from day to day. Your whole nature is in a state of turmoil. Have you ever seen how a path running through the fields looks very early in springtime? Perhaps not. Well, there is nothing very attractive about it—it is a miry mess. The snow is melting and little streamlets are gushing forth, and there is mud everywhere, so that one can scarcely find the bottom. But it is a glorious time of promise, for everything in the earth is alive, and now it is all bent on coming up. And that is the way with you, John. All of this is springtime, and there is so much that is foul and cold and barren, but life is the strongest, nevertheless, and it is life that is bursting forth.

Curb your impatience, and don't promise God more than you can fulfill. "If things don't improve now—if I fall just once more, I shall never succeed." How do you know that? I am praying for you, John, for your nature, that is slow to grasp all these things; I love it, and Christ will gradually cleanse and help and at last save it completely—but you must allow a little time. Surely you understand me: we are not lowering our colors, we

are not screwing our ideals down one inch; we will not aim lower than the stars. But you must reckon with time and with nature. There is a law at your age (and at mine, too), I can tell you, that in the religious life your understanding and imagination are far in advance of your will-power.

I could also tell you something about the cross of Jesus, but I think we shall let that wait until later. You are not to be brought deeper down just now—that is not what you need. You must believe God. He has helped many before you; I know quite a few of them.

Do you know what all of this puts me vividly in mind of? Many years ago I came into a room and saw a boy who was a little older than I, and whom I thought a great deal of, standing with his head resting against a book-shelf, crying. I was greatly frightened; at first I thought perhaps he could not get his arithmetic problems, but it was not that. Then I thought he must be sick, but no, it was not that either. At last he told me—he was so troubled over himself. It was not a certain thing he had done; he simply said—and I can hear him yet—"O, I am so bad!"

I could not understand it, for I had always thought he was so good. But now we understand it, both of us. Not without pain and sorrow does one grow up; but there is one we can count on as our best friend and ally—and that one is God.

V

It is also instructive to observe what took place during the time preceding the awakening of the boy Jesus.

First of all this—that He went off by Himself. For surely it is plain that it was not through a misunderstanding, nor because He had lost track of the time, that He did not start out with the others. It is obvious that He stayed behind purposely, because He has felt that He needed to be alone, and sensed the coming of an experience.

Next—He has listened. Without a doubt, from His earliest boyhood, He has been the most attentive of listeners, when Joseph, or another of the family-heads of the village, read aloud, each in his turn, the Law and the Prophets at the Synagogue. But here in the Holy Temple He has listened with all His soul. It is commonly believed that this was His first visit to Jerusalem. No one knows; but if that is the case, we can imagine how the impressions have crowded in upon the lad when for the first time He has seen all the places so rich in memories, and when He stood upon the old temple site. And if He has been there at an earlier age, and has seen it all before, then He has experienced something with which we also are familiar: that things which we have often seen and heard before suddenly become new and living for us, because the mind is attuned so differently and has become so receptive to these things.

There is still another thing to be noted: He has been asking questions. The text states this plainly. Surely these wise old teachers must be able to explain all of the things which He has been thinking and wondering about. O, if only we had known what sort of questions they were. Those who heard were in a state of amazement over them.

* * *

The same signs still herald the awakening of youth.

It is the time when the youth goes away by himself and is, figuratively speaking, far away from his own mother and father. It is sad, and it is peculiar, undoubtedly, but it is true. So it is, and we had better face the truth than rock ourselves to sleep with beautiful delusions. Of course it would make us much happier, it would seem much more natural, if the big children would come and confide in mother and father, as they did when they were little; and there is something unloving in this constant avoidance of each other, never wishing to tell anything, not so much as wanting to tell of such little things as—yes, as what one had for luncheon where one visited yesterday, when mother asks about it. Plainly, it must be of interest to her. And those who will not even tell of the trivialities which life, after all, largely consists of, conceal also the difficult things from each other. But the elders have also their share of the

blame. There are many parents who have never concerned themselves as to what principles should be laid down for the bringing up of their children, and who have never discussed these matters with each other. They think that is something that will take care of itself, this bringing up of children. And perhaps it does take care of itself astoundingly well, as long as the children are little. But when they have grown big, these parents no longer understand them, and become quite helpless, because they do not at all realize what is going on in the children. It helps but little, then, to force oneself upon them. "Tell your mother everything!" A mother may also be too motherly, too officious—that is to say, a little too domineering. Then the youth becomes even more reticent; it is no longer the time for her direct effort. Instead he chooses a counsellor outside the home—the pastor who confirmed him, or a teacher who has real character, or a young people's leader who has won the confidence of youth. To this stranger, perhaps, he reveals his thoughts; he confides in him. But if he finds no one he thinks he can speak to, he remains solitary. Once in a while one sees such a young person coming quite alone to the Lord's Table. It is good when he finds the way thither; often they end in quite different places.

It is the time when the young listen. How they can sit and drink in every word that is

spoken! How attentive they are, how well they remember! Nothing should set the goal higher for those who speak to youth than the consciousness that there is such a one sitting listening with his whole soul. By all means such a one must not be disappointed. It is a great sin not to work painstakingly in preparation for such a talk—and it pays if one does. It is said that man has five senses. Five! Why, a maturing boy has many more! He has one sense that so orders things that no matter what madcap prank he undertakes to perform, he nevertheless gets through it without trouble; in the remotest suburbs he has a sense that feels the presence of a policeman long before that individual comes around the corner—he has also a pure sense that distinguishes between what is true and what is put on; and a dangerous sense that causes him to listen both to that which can help him and that which will lead him to ruin: he is all open doors, all thirsty pores. O, enter—improve the opportunity! But don't start to use sweet phrases to them; though you say "My dear young friends" twenty times over—that only makes bad matters worse. On the contrary, you must not be afraid to preach Christ to them. They get on capitally with Him. Of course they understand Him better as an example than as the Redeemer; they understand Him best of all as the Master and Friend—to Him they can go and tell everything. They can get a great deal out of their

New Testaments, particularly the four Gospels, of course.

And when they do dare to come forward to ask, then the hour is near! For at that age a question means much more than an answer. To a certain extent we have suggested the answer by our question—at all events it is we who choose the topic—but they bring the question themselves, and by it they reveal what their thoughts are centered upon. It is a good sign when the young folks have much to ask about. True, a fool can ask more questions than ten wise men are able to answer, but the boy is not so great a fool as to go to the wise men, who are as a rule very impracticable; he goes to those whom he feels are sympathetic and manly.

He will ask you how it can be that there seem to be two natures within himself; he cannot understand it. He realizes that he must take the initiative now, and feels himself to be like an exceedingly complex machine, with the construction of which he is unfamiliar. He will ask concerning things that he is not at all interested in, because he has not yet the courage to ask about the thing he does want to know; but if your answers are always serious, with a little barb now and then, he will finally ask about that concerning which he really came to inquire. He will ask what causes him to be so unhappy at times, and so tired of everything, and whether it is possible that there are others who are sit-

uated as he. He will ask how to gain the victory in his temptations, and how one may learn to pray with genuine warmth—and all that sort of thing.

VI

Our story does not end in Jerusalem; we are permitted to go with the boy and His parents a little way, and to find out what took place after the awakening in the life of Jesus. It is told in a few words. The boy went home with His parents and was subject unto them, and advanced further in wisdom and grace with God and men.

And if the youth of our day did for a time seem to go away from the ones at home, he was worth ten times as much as a son when he has had an experience with God. As a rule there is no special reason for anxiety on the score of unwholesomeness. A mother once took me to task, saying it would be my fault if her son should lose his mind. He had been awakened, though not through my effort. "My husband will not write to you concerning it," she added, "for he is much exercised concerning what has happened." (The "exercised" man was a pastor.) No, it is not Christianity that steals the children away from their home; it is usually something entirely different. It was something else that stole an eighteen-year-old son from his home and mother, so that it was necessary to send him across the Atlantic; and the day that mother

had accompanied him down to the steamer and had "seen the green waters of the harbor grow wider and wider" between him and her, she wrote: "He was my only son—when his sweet face disappeared, my last light went out."

"He was subject unto them." To put it plainly, there was no nonsense about Him. "He advanced in wisdom," that is to say, He has learned how to adapt Himself to His environment, or: He has learned to see everything in God's light. "And in grace with God and men." That is: He has become more likeable than before, because He lives before the face of God, in the sunshine of His smile.

After all, does not this whole matter resolve itself into an appeal to the homes?

It is the spirit of the home that means so much in this matter. We read, you will remember, concerning the child in Nazareth, before the great turning-point in Jerusalem was reached, that "the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him": a clean character and a God-fearing spirit were already developing beautifully. We know a little about those two people who were chosen by God to create a childhood home for Him who was to be the Savior of the world. Joseph was a clean young man, considerate and sensitive, unwilling to disgrace the woman to whom he had pledged his faith (Matthew 1:19). And she was a humble, pious woman, who accepted that which could not but terrify her, with the quiet

words: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke 1:38.)

And where there is a pure spirit in the home —clean and beautiful language, pretty things on the walls, decent newspapers on the table, good people as guests, a kindly understanding with the servants, a warm feeling for the man of small means, love of country, pleasure in flowers and animals, noble thoughts and courtesy in those who put their impress upon the home—in such a home there will be found the right conditions for the unfolding of pure character in the child.

And where there is true piety in the older members of the family—where Sunday is different from the other days, and more festive; where God's Word is read daily; where the path to the communion table is not forgotten; and where gratitude for prosperous days and patience in time of difficulty are unmistakeable tokens of a spirit that is surrendered to God—there a pious spirit will quite naturally appear in the little ones. No one needs to drag them to church; they come willingly, asking if they may, and sit as still as mice, and Heaven alone knows what they get out of a sermon.

Such homes do we wish for our nation—a "Nazareth on earth." Where a clean character and a devout spirit are nurtured and helped from earliest childhood, there the time of awakening in the lives of the very young

will most closely parallel that of the boy Jesus—and perhaps run its course with the least pain.

CHAPTER III

Jesus at the Jordan—Ideal and Mystery

[Dedicated to the student world.]

"There goes Henry Camp, a perfect man, who has never done anything that could harm his body or his soul."—The Testimony of a Friend.

I

AS is well known, not many details have come down to us concerning the youth of Christ. We who are young ourselves, or who have been given a work among the young, may deplore this fact; there is nothing we would rather hear more about than just those years in Nazareth when Jesus was young. Ordinarily it is a trait common to nearly all the biographies of famous men, and especially so with autobiographies, that they are always most entertaining and engrossing where they have to do with the childhood and youth of the subject. Whether this is because these are the times they best remember, or, which is more likely the case, because it is the time that is richest in incident, I cannot say positively; but when we come to the later years, with their offices and politics and honors, it is no longer so refreshing and interesting. To be sure, our Savior did not become old, and His story is so short and yet

so full of riches for all time, that there is no time for it to become tedious; and enough is told to give us all material for deep study. If we had only been given, as an introduction to His life, a group of stories and anecdotes from His youth! Nevertheless, it is surely due neither to accident, nor forgetfulness, nor ignorance, that the four sacred writers are so completely silent concerning their Master's years of youth. Those years are entirely His own, and no curious eye shall disturb that blessed obscurity. The little we do know is sufficient to enable us to sketch the main lines that characterize these years. Thirty years concerning which nothing is told—in other words, an inconceivably long line of quiet days, each like the other, a long period of waiting for a youth who feels that He has something upon His heart, and yet not too long a time for the one who uses the time intelligently for preparation.

But when finally the time of waiting and preparation was at an end, He said one thing which tells us more of those youthful years than many stories would have done. It is when He stands upon the boundary-line that separates the secret years of preparation from the public ministry that He says it; and it is the running waters of the Jordan that draw the line of demarcation between the years of waiting and the Messianic work. Here He breaks the eighteen years of silence which have passed since the day when He sat as a

boy in the temple; and again He speaks, so that all generations give ear to His words.

He came to John the Baptist to be baptized of him, and John feels that he cannot carry out the request; for Jesus was different from all the others. They usually confessed their sins before they were baptized; and it has been thought by many that when John had listened to Jesus' confession, he had felt himself to be the sinner, for it was not His own sins that Jesus had confessed, but the sins of the people, as though they were weighing down upon Him. "No; baptize thou me instead," objected John. But then, as he delayed, and made excuses, Jesus said the word of deliverance which decided the matter and did away with all misgivings. "Suffer it now," He said, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

These are His words at this period in His life, and we shall surely not go astray in drawing the conclusion that His words do not apply simply to this single situation; rather, it is an expression of the mind that dwelt in the youth Jesus. The one saying sheds light upon all the secret years which have gone before; this is the result of the character development which has been going on; this is the rule according to which He has accustomed Himself to live: "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness. Thus had He played. There has been imagina-

tion in His play; but it has not been untamed, and He has never taken advantage of those weaker than Himself. It is possible that the youths of Nazareth have lost their interest in play for a time when their ideal, the son of Joseph the carpenter, as He was called, no longer played with them. Boys can often spoil the game for each other—that was something He had noticed (Matthew 11:16 ff.).

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness. Thus had He worked. He has delivered His work at the time agreed upon; He has not promised something for to-morrow when it was not possible to finish it until the day after to-morrow; and substantial, painstaking work was the only kind that came from His hands. He must always have been diligent, and especially so if it is true that His foster father died while the boy was relatively young (which there is much to indicate), and as the first-born He has had to support a mother with many little ones.

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness; and this has been His watchword among His brothers and sisters. It is a common belief that the relationship between Jesus and His brothers has not been cordial. There is nothing to indicate that this was the case. True, they have not understood Him, but on several occasions even His own beloved mother had difficulty in following Him. Nevertheless, they have admired and loved Him; in mistaken solicitude they tried to protect His health by

attempting to get Him away from the multitude; and at other times, in a spirit of false brotherly pride they tried to persuade Him to push Himself more to the fore (John 7:3). But when He was risen from the dead, His brother James was one of the first to whom He revealed Himself (1 Cor. 15:7); all of His brothers are in the first little congregation which awaits the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14); and many of the words of Jesus are echoed in the letter His brother wrote (the Epistle of James), though James himself, in holy veneration, calls Him "our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory" (James 2:1), and exhorts the brethren to avoid at all costs a spirit of subservience to persons, when we believe in Him—for that was always farthest from the mind of that brother who once walked on earth so simply and fairly, who was so remarkably free from the changeability that characterized His fellows.

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness; with this rule of life He has met all temptations from His youth up. The story of His Saviorship begins with the three great temptations in the wilderness; thither He is led by the Spirit as soon as He has received, in the waters of Jordan, the confirmation of His call. And when Luke has told of that great meeting with the tempter which ended with the defeat of the enemy all along the line, he adds the very significant expression: "the devil . . . departed from Him for a season" (Luke 4:13).

Which means that this was only the great introduction, coming immediately after the rich experiences connected with His baptism (this still holds good: the most dangerous and disgusting temptations often come right after the best and holiest hours); for the tempter came many times afterward, in varying forms. And he had been there before. Just as surely as Jesus was a true son of man, just so surely has He been tempted all through His boyhood and His entire youth. That which we call the temptation in the wilderness was only an especially wild and fantastic form of temptation, which took shape after the great call had come to Him and which He had accepted; but during the many long years of quiet waiting His temptations have doubtless assumed such forms as we might expect in the case of a young Israelite of His time. And here also every temptation has been met and conquered with this rule of life: It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness. We are never told that Jesus was tempted by that which most young people involuntarily think of when the word "temptation" is mentioned. No, and for this reason: by the time He appears before Israel and the narrative begins, that battle has long since been fought to an end. But He has undoubtedly had to meet that temptation; otherwise He would not have been a real young person; with this difference from others, however, that temptation never found entrance with Him, but from the very first moment has

been driven back, met with astonishment and loathing: It becometh me to do that which is right. That is the reason that, although His enemies later brought against Him every false accusation conceivable, they never dared even to suggest a weakness at this point, notwithstanding the fact that everyone knew that publicans and harlots were His constant companions. To have done so would have been equivalent to branding themselves as public liars. It is a disreputable and evil-minded psychology which has tried in recent years to establish an especially intimate connection between religious and sexual soul-phenomena. The origin of all true religion is unquestionably high above mere sexuality. But He was a human being, who stood with both feet solidly planted upon this earth, and He has won everything through victorious struggle. It was the unknown, spirit-filled author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who, in due time, should therefrom draw this beautiful and helpful teaching: He has tried it all, but is without sin; therefore He understands us, who are tempted, and does not despise nor loathe us. And this was the thought wherewith He won His secret victories: It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness.

II

But notice, now, that this life-rule of His, which shone upon His path all through His youth, led Him right into that which we shall

call "The Mystery." Walking the path of duty, He meets, one day, the miracle. By following the counsel of that voice: you must do all that which is right, in all every-day relationships, He suddenly, without warning, makes the great discovery in His inner life. The narrow way leads Him down to the Jordan; and there He is met by a revelation.

Just what took place in the baptism of Jesus no one knows clearly, because He is the unique one among all mankind; and opinions will differ, according to the conception each of us has of the Christ-figure. We have spoken of this in the foregoing chapter. Following that great experience in the temple in Jerusalem, at the age of twelve, there has again been a period of steady, quiet growth. The word is not chosen by chance; that narrative ends with just this statement, that the child, "advanced in . . . stature, and in favor with God and men"; and the expression means simple, quiet progress according to an inner law of nature. Never has He forgotten that a call came to Him that day in the temple. And He has gone forward according to the light which He received that day as to His Father's love; He has entered deeper into the personal relationship which He found there.

I should like to see Nazareth sometime. Undoubtedly most of the places in the Holy Land will disappoint the expectant pilgrim. A wise and mighty hand has erased the holy footprints, and He is not to blame because

places of pilgrimage are worshiped instead of Him who once walked there. But I should like to see Nazareth; for the mountains must still be the same, and the broad expanse of outlook away over to Carmel, snow-clad Hermon, the distant, desert mountains of the land east of the Jordan, Lebanon the romantically beautiful, Tabor, and far off to the west the blue Mediterranean—all of this is still the same horizon which His young eyes saw as He stood, when evening fell, upon the crest of the hill and shaded His eyes, while His gaze sought the great world out yonder, and ended by following the golden clouds of evening. But it became Him to fulfill all righteousness, and so long as that voice had not spoken plainly to Him, so long was it right to wait yet awhile and prepare Himself for the great call by being faithful in the lesser things.

And now He heard of the great movement which was agitating the people. The Johannine voice called, and all, even the best of the youth of Israel, went to hear. Also He, too, went, betook Himself thither. It became Him to fulfil all righteousness; and it must be right to see and hear the man who had something to say to all of his people, and who came with a message from God. He saw him and heard him, and allowed Himself to be baptized by him. It became Him to fulfil all righteousness; and this man, who obviously spoke with authority from God, bade everyone to be baptized with the baptism of water; so it must

be God's way for everyone at that time—also for Him. The fact that He had lived up to the ideal did not exempt Him from following a commandment which perhaps He did not fully understand. On the contrary, it made it easy and natural for Him to obey. Therefore He, too, asked to be baptized.

Then the great experience came. On the banks of Jordan He heard that voice once more—and still more plainly than on that Passover in the Temple, when He was a boy. It spoke to Him in tones that could not be mistaken, calling upon all His slumbering memories and secret desires. His horizon widened, yet Heaven was not far away; the two worlds fused into one: this world with its Jordan of chattering wavelets, and that—a heavenly sanctuary of unapproachable light. It sounded so home-like, as from a great yearning heart: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased," and a pair of white wings brought a greeting from home—the gift of the Spirit, without measure. It had paid to follow the ideal: the mystery revealed itself to Him. It was His dedication to the long-awaited call—His true ordination. He was being equipped for His great and holy work. Deeply was He assured once more that God was His Father, that God's love was His own possession, that up yonder was His true home, yonder where the clouds had glided before the vision, hiding again the shining towers from His sight; and that gift was not

taken away from Him again, the anointing and fire of the Spirit, which took possession of all His wonderful human attributes and consecrated and shaped them for the service of God.

That is the story of Ideal and Mystery, of Him who all through His youth lived up to the Ideal and who, therefore, in God's own time, was marvellously initiated into the Mystery.

III

Now this is what I am stressing—that the same bridge between Ideal and Mystery is to be found this very day; and when so many do not succeed in reaching the other side, that is, finding peace in a religious conviction, the reason is this: so few are deeply serious in their attitude toward the Ideal.

What I am saying holds good in the case of all youth; but I am thinking now particularly of the student class. Many a stone has been placed in their path; and they will perhaps most easily understand my thoughts.

The student must pass through years of preparation and must wait long ere he can enter a useful occupation and earn his own living. Others are early turned out of the nest; that is not easy, but it makes them independent and leads them sooner to the goal. I remember standing one day, between classes, looking out of one of the University Annex windows. My eye fell upon a blue-bloused

apprentice-lad who was loading some boxes onto a hand-cart, and I remember thinking with a peculiar feeling of shame: "Which of us is, after all, doing the most good, you or the young fellow down yonder?" That is a painful feeling, especially for a poor student who is a burden to his unlearned parents and who may at times be obliged to accept help from people who are utter strangers to him. It has a discouraging effect on our idealism, too; for when all is said and done, it is easier to have lofty ideals and become more refined in one's interests and nature and mode of thought if one does not have to keep house with a bread-box and a butter-jar, but can go and buy this, that, or the other thing without misgivings. There are undoubtedly many students who are under-nourished and who, during the hard years of college and university life, receive a blow, so far as health is concerned, from which they never entirely recover*; and much of that which is condemned as philistinism, is caused by the narrow, embittering conditions under which the student eked out his existence. People who can afford it and who have the gift of winning young people, could do much in this matter by opening their homes to the young students, not only by inviting them occasionally to dinner, but by letting them feel at home; then

*Bismarck claimed that a very considerable percentage of Germany's student youth dies proportionately early as a result of overwork. Lafcadio Hearn tells some heart-rending occurrences of the same sort in the Japanese student world.

the man of the house could give them a bit of good counsel now and then, and his wife could give a little touch to their manners; but the spirit of the home should itself, more than any spoken word, ennoble and uplift. But the time of waiting during those many years of preparation, may also seem very long for students who do not need to fight for their existence—especially for those who are not studying simply to obtain a position, but who have chosen a calling which they long to fill.

But is it possible to think of a better motto for the long line of youthful years than the one which shone over the Savior's preparation-time: "It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness?" Apply this to the various phases of a student's life. It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness; that means, doubtless, first of all: you must be diligent. I shall not say much on that point, for in our time the danger is more likely to be that our students are too diligent than otherwise. Even here the struggle for existence is at work.

There is another danger which lies closer to our door—the danger of egoism. That danger is of course present with all of us; but there is an unconscious egoism which has found root in the student class. The reason, doubtless, lies in the fact that they are still in the period of preparation and are not as yet making a tangible contribution to the welfare of those about them; it is so easy to think:

when I attend to my studies and my lectures and my coach*, I have done my duty; **my, my, my,** nothing but **my.** But it becometh me to fulfil all righteousness, and there are others who have a claim besides myself and my studies.

Why even I, myself, have other talents which have a claim upon my attention—and it becometh me to fulfil all righteousness. It was never intended that one who was given the great privelege of belonging to the joyous ranks of the student class and who was permitted to drink from the springs of wisdom, should become a mere drudge and a grind. It is your duty to become a cultured person, since you shall one day be influential in large circles. That is a thing many of our students forget. In earlier days this was not so; they did take time, at any rate, to read Goethe and Schiller and our own classics; but I should like to know how much the average student of our day reads beyond the newspapers and one or two widely discussed books. O, if only one might live his student-years over again. One did read and see a few things; but for the study of geology, for instance—the simple story of our own earth —there was no time, and one keeps discovering more and more things which should have been accomplished in those days.

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness

*In this case a special tutor who assists in preparing a student for examination.

—that has to do, also, with your home. But it is so easy to neglect your home just a little; the new world of freedom and the many connections with others of the same age can so soon claim too much of your attention; and it ends by your coming to father only when your bills have to be paid, and mother has more to do with your wardrobe than with you, and your youngest sister discovers (this is just between you and me) that you are just a big smart Aleck.

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness; assuredly in facing the temptations that come to a student this is especially to be the watchword. And these temptations are many, and they destroy many, especially in our country where the university city is also the capital and offers not only all of the refined temptations of a metropolis, but makes it so easy for the individual student to vanish in the crowd. In a smaller city, where one was better known, and where temptations were fewer, it would be easier for many to conquer. But now the university-seats are Copenhagen and Berlin and Oslo and Tokyo, and so a very clear motto is needed if one is to hold his ground, and a very stable character in order to carry out that motto.

We are tempted quite as much as was Jesus in Nazareth or in the wilderness. "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves"—that is to say: Follow your natural inclination, but do it right away, upon

your own responsibility, without faith in God. There are basic instincts in our nature which are divinely ordained; the strongest are doubtless "der Hunger und die Liebe". The instinct to preserve our life and to reproduce life—concerning these shall none speak shamefacedly, nor need these subjects be shunned in decent conversation. To satisfy his hunger is the right of every man; and it later fell to the lot of Jesus to perform a miracle by which thousands were fed—nevertheless, it was a temptation to God's Son to change stones into loaves when He was suffering the pangs of hunger in the desert. For it was not the time now to perform a miracle and follow His own desires; He had not been given permission by God, and if He were to take the right, He would in that very moment be making an idol out of an otherwise innocent desire. Lord Palmerston is said to have defined swinishness thus: "Swinishness is anything which is not in its proper place"; and he is right. That is what constitutes all that is sin in the field of sex—that which, at the proper time, when happiness is received from God's hand, is beautiful, and fitting, and right, one claims before the proper time in order to follow a lust of the moment, and thus acts immorally. Youth, guard yourself against anticipation, against a premature claim, against taking before permission is granted, against breaking the [illegible] God has said you may, against [illegible] ment's

pleasure to gratify your own desire, against stealing your happiness before its time. All sin is disobedience also in the matter of sex. He who claims his reward beforehand, makes an idol of his instinct and himself its slave. That which according to nature was intended to bring joy now degrades its victim, because it is not governed by a sanctified will and put to serve a higher purpose. The result does not fail to appear: a doubting disposition. Mark my words: It is not true, as one might have supposed, that one's moral views shape one's conduct of life. On the contrary, in the larger number of cases it is the habits that make one's moral views. I repeat it: As a rule it is not the faith of youth that decides their life; it is their immoral life which leads them away from God. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"—yes, and miserable are the impure in heart: for it will ever be increasingly difficult for them to see God. They tire quickly of questions of religion. Every victory in the field strengthens faith; every fall weakens it.

Nor is the second great temptation entirely strange to us. The tempter took Him up onto the pinnacle of the Temple and suggested to Him that He cast Himself down in order to see whether the angels would come and bear Him up on their hands; but His refusal was absolute, for this would have been to tempt God. You know the temptation well: Try just to [illegible] you can go. Who has

ever said: I shall fall!? None. No, but try, just try: I will just take one look into that book to see if it is as bad as the folks say; a little walk does not mean anything serious—mother is always misunderstanding everything; I don't have to do everything the fellows do, just because I go out with them—a fellow isn't allowed to do anything; I am just going to talk a minute with that chap who has such an odd, dangerous influence on me; I'll show them I can stand something—and one mixes one more whiskey. O yes, to be sure, you were just going over to the edge of the Temple roof and a bit farther; but one needs an especially clear head and a sure step when one has to keep his balance upon a temple-pinnacle, and you may depend upon it, ninety-nine out of a hundred falls were due to a dizzy head, and as a rule no angels came to bear that one up who tempted God.

Then at last the tempter cast aside the mask and became brutal and tried to drive Christ into a corner. He said: "Cast thyself at my feet and worship me—then I will give you all the glory in the world, for it is mine"—and it has often happened that those who have resisted the finer forms of temptation were suddenly taken off their guard by the brutal attack, especially when it appeared upon a background of something showy and grand; and only by a mighty exertion of the will can the still-untouched youth drive the tempter from the field: It becometh me to fulfil all

righteousness—O God, that I could have been so near to forgetting that*.

I say that these words apply under all conditions, for the one who wills to live an ideal student-life, also with respect to his possessions. As a rule a student has a very small amount of money on which to keep house, but it is in the little things that one's faithfulness is tried, and there are those who are yet poorer than you. How well I remember it—it was an evening just before Christmas; the streets were filled with the usual December slush, and there was a ring of foggy haze around each street light. I had gotten out into the outskirts of Nørrebro when I happened to remember that I should have bought some Christmas candles. There was a grocer's store in the cellar at the next corner, so I went down there. He brought out a box of candles, but they were not quite good enough to suit me; then he crawled up on his step-ladder and produced some candles that were somewhat better; these I thought might do, though they were a very cheap sort. At my side stood a woman, not particularly old, but pitifully worn-out and tired; her hair was thin and scraped together into a knot, and her old gray shawl was frayed and worn—it was wet with

*It touches me every time I see the childish handwriting of the little ship's boy who wrote, as his ship lay off the coast of Brazil: "I have tried two or three times to read my Bible, but every time someone says, 'See, now he is pretending to be so good!' Once they tried to tempt me, but I wouldn't give in; and I held onto my innocence *which I did want to save*." The last phrase is especially dear to me: at once stubborn and fearless—truly boy-like.

half-melted snow. As I remember it now, she wanted some rice. It chanced to cost a quarter of a cent* more than she had reckoned it would. O the hesitation of that hand as she fumbled in her purse for the needed coin and finally laid it, as if still in doubt, upon the counter—I see it all before me; I do not suppose I shall ever forget it. Mark you, I had not committed any sin—at least I am not conscious of having done so; but I felt as though I had some guilt upon my conscience; those Christmas candles burned in my pocket; that picture—the woman with her few shillings—kept following me. All that evening, in the background of my mind, there was a spirit of dejection, a species of spiritual discomfort; and that feeling still comes to me. Young fellow-students, we must learn to lay aside something for the others; once in a while we must revise our list of necessities and get rid of a couple of unnecessary ones—have you not experienced something of the secret pleasure one has in sending a few savings to someone we have read about or become interested in?

It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; and the ability to sense another's rights is one of the first things one should look for among those who are masters in the intellectual realm. I ask you, is it right to let five or more years of student life pass without letting

*The Danish "Øre" is 1/00 of a "Krone," which is normally worth about 27c.

the social problems knock at your door? Yea, more than that—for they have knocked more than once, but never have they been permitted to come inside your sphere of interests. It is not required that we master these problems —still less, that we solve them yet. But just to discuss them with others, to try to understand them, and to have the pleasure of looking forward to the time when you shall have some small share in their solution—these are things you ought to be somewhat acquainted with.

One of the things that has made Bishop Martensen lastingly great is this, that he was one of the first to put the labor question into his "Christian Ethics" for well-informed and sympathetic treatment. This is perhaps worth calling to mind, since the church is always being accused of not having had a realization of these problems or of being the born opponent of labor.

It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness—but the greatest wrong of all is committed by many of the student youth of our time against the Kingdom of the Spirit. The best sense which they themselves own, and the richest values which lie at their very door—these they neglect or deride. I have heard one of our professors ridicule Paul before a large audience that was made up entirely of young students; and I have heard another make the statement in a lecture, that inside of a hundred years the devil would be

abolished; while a third accused Christianity of fostering crime. And I know of two professors at one of our institutions of learning who never neglect an opportunity of putting Biblical concepts in a silly and ludicrous light before their student hearers; one of them, in fact, is reported to have a penchant for encouraging youth to kick over the traces. I know of a doctor of philosophy who scoffed coarsely at the Lord's Supper in one of his lectures on history at a seminary. That is the school many of our students must go through. Should we then be surprised at seeing hundreds of our young academicians forming the habit of sitting in judgment upon the truths of religion over a glass of beer and a cigar, instead of permitting themselves to be judged by these truths? The things that oppose Christianity—Georg Brandes' contempt, and Høffding's melancholy declaration of bankruptcy—these things they read, and at that their reading is quite cursory. But they will not listen to the other side; they never so much as give the Bible a thought. Is this right? It is the most naked wrong, both against the truth of revelation and against the best in themselves.

IV

Now this I say: The best one of us all, the only one who through all the many years of preparation, consistently and at all points, with never a deviation, always acted accord-

ing to this motto: It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness; the only youth the race has ever known who was true to the Ideal—He was carried into the Mystery by the Ideal, and that rule of living led Him quite naturally into the realm of the super-natural.

And so it will also be with us.

It can happen in two ways.

One way is this: To have our eyes opened for Jesus Himself. The one who goes bravely on with that watchword: It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness, will gain a keen sense of the Ideal. He will keep his eyes upon all that is high and pure and holy. He will not be able to avoid a meeting with Jesus Christ. In Him he will find a spiritual kinsman—yet one who is infinitely above him. But he will never again be content with a less worthy model. As a young student from India put it, "When one has looked into that land just once, he can never forget it." And he will study that Jesus with all zeal and love for the truth, and go to the sources himself. And then he will find that the one he so deeply admired is not only to be seen as at an infinite distance, but He beckons and draws everyone to Himself—even you. You come nearer and you hear what He says of Himself. He cannot lie, He cannot be mistaken as to Himself, but they are singular things He says of Himself. He says that this is not His home; He stands in a mystical and entirely unique relation to God, His sources have an eternal

fountain-head, His power extends over all future time; He is God's Son. You are in the midst of the Mystery and there are yet many experiences awaiting you.

There is another way—one much more commonly found. You strove to realize the Ideal —and you made a miserable failure of it. You did want to follow that rule of living, but instead you experienced how terribly hard it is to fulfil all righteousness. Even a hasty inspection quickly revealed to you the fact that you had been defeated along the whole line. Your studies and interests—how superficial it had all been: a resolution, a running start, an amateurish effort, but hardly a thing carried to completion and really mastered. And the folks at home—you were always with your friends, nothing was too good for them; and to no purpose at all you destroyed the peaceful spirit of your home by loudly defending your immature views which you knew grieved your father, and which you must have known could not change his opinions. And it was very, very seldom that you came to your mother and said: "Let us take a little walk together, just we two"—not even that much would you offer! And even your relations with the "fellows"; most of it, after all, must have been self-love; you enjoyed a pleasurable existence in the company of your own little group of elite, and made great efforts to avoid the "bores"; but one day you learn that one of your classmates has already

"gone to the dogs"—completely; and now that you hear of it, it occurs to you that you had known something of it before but you never stretched out a hand to help him. Is that fulfilling all righteousness? I do not want you to confide in me, I am fearful of pressing a confession from anyone; but I am asking you to consider how it has gone with you in holding fast to the ideal in your temptations. And I know when all these relationships are taken into account and weighed carefully, many a one will stand as a stricken man. But if after all that man is earnest, he will not stop here, but he will look about for help to get out of this extremity. Upon this background there is light that falls upon the figure of Jesus—a clear yet mild light. Is it not remarkable that He is the only one in the whole world who stands and says to sinners: "Come to me with your sin, I can take it away from you?" That is what He does say, and He gives His own life to make it possible. And you do not understand it, but you believe it; you believe Him —and the Ideal, the shattered ideals, have brought you into the midst of the Mystery.

V

A movement coming from God, which like a great wind would sweep down over our own times and peoples, would help many to an appreciation of this Mystery. A spiritual wave like the one that passed through Israel

when Jesus was young, preparing His contemporaries for the Messiah and the Messiah for His calling.

Our generation has never known days of real richness, and there has been no leader really fitted to become the hero of our youth. But everywhere there are little streams running into the Jordan, and there have always been breezes from the great spiritual blasts to refresh us. There are other movements than the one I shall now mention, but I know best of all the World's Student Christian Federation, and am thankful that it was my good fortune to be young at the time when it also was young. And although the student movement has as yet won no decisive victories in our little country, it is nevertheless a wonderful thing to recall our Nordic and national student gatherings with their Christian programs. And yet all of these are but weak ripples of the great spiritual waves that are passing through the student youth of the western countries. Never shall I forget that week at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, when glowing insects swarmed among the bushes like little lamps peacefully afloat; and the waves which chatteringly washed up onto the beach made us think involuntarily of Genesareth, and it seemed that Christ might at any moment come walking over the dewy grass to the young students; or that sunset on Moody's hill at Northfield, when we lay on the green hillside under the leafy trees and

listened to John R. Mott as he spoke of our calling of the future—he looked like a cherub and spoke like an apostle—and our glance followed the silver ribbon of a river away to the violet mountains in the distance, and yet farther away. I like to remember that delegates from all of the world's Christian Student Associations met in Sorø under our own Danish beeches, and a few years afterward in Tokyo, in the brilliant island kingdom of sunrise. And we have seen not only outstanding leaders, but also noble young characters whom this student movement fostered; often we saw them most clearly when they suddenly disappeared from our view, leaving a shining record behind them: Hugh Beaver and Horace Rose, the former from the eastern part of the United States, the latter from the west; Eustace Maxwell in England, and Verling Helm in Japan, and in our own country Fred Aamundsen.

So we are not to praise ourselves, but neither are we to lose courage. It is much too early to sound a fanfare of trumpets to celebrate the overthrow of Brandesianism: for now the time has come to harvest its fruits; those who were young in the 70's are now the leading men in press and university. But a new army is already marching forward. It is a pleasant thought, surely, that winter after winter we have been able to stand, every Wednesday evening, in the midst of a group of two hundred older boys, of whom the

majority were expecting to enter college; and they all knew that an hour of Bible study was all they would receive—nothing else. And it is a fact, nevertheless, that there are more students in all of the various branches of study who are confessing Christians or who are interested in religious questions than there have been for many generations. We know of teachers who are enemies of Christ; but we know an ever-increasing number who are aiming at a harmonious development in their pupils: body, soul, and spirit. And while it is true that the manners and speech of many doctors in Danish hospitals are still raw beyond measure (people who go to Scotland and America quickly notice a refreshing difference), nevertheless, there are not a few who are studying medicine who intend to serve Him who "sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:2); and those who are never sent out into the great, beautiful world will become, nevertheless, that sort of cheerful, manly Christians that believing physicians usually become, of whom Luke was perhaps the forerunner. Denmark is perhaps the first country which for several years has had a nominee for the bar as secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association; and Zenas the lawyer (Titus 3:13) will soon have several young brothers in the faith in our land. True, the general atmosphere was often obscene and unworthy of honorable men, both during the periods of

instruction at the Veterinary College and at the Polytechnic Institute. I know students whom no one could accuse of being prudish or pietistic, for whom it was a daily torture to listen to the conversation of their comrades; but I can also tell of not so few young engineers among my Christian friends; and there will be need of them in China when the duck-pond gets too small for them. And it is true that we have often enough listened to a minor school official speak scornfully of religious instruction and seen one who was known to be an enemy of Christianity appointed theological instructor, but on the other hand there is no body of young people who are more attentive than those in our seminaries. So I do not think that the Church need lose courage, even though there is reason for being concerned about her student youth.

But to the young students I would say: "Heed the time." Let me tell you something —it was but a picture, a fleeting impression: we came marching along the country road, a flock of young fellows and some older boys— a manifold personification of joy that was passing by, singing at the top of forty voices: beyond the fence she stood, a girl who was still young, poorly clad; she paused at her work and her eyes followed the procession as it passed by and soon was lost to view around a turn in the road—she was on the outside, had never taken part in anything young people sang as they stormed on toward a shining

goal; and now the garden would be ten times as empty since she had seen joy pass by on the other side of the fence. Und wer's nie gekannt der stehle weinend sich aus diesem Bund.* Perhaps it was but my imagination—but you will understand the picture: When a vital movement passes by your door, you must not stay inside your house. Perhaps it may never return, at least not in so festive a garb.

Up—be consecrated to service! Be not content to aspire to a position that will permit you to marry, but desire a calling that you can fill!

The call is to you; go out to meet your hour of happiness.

VI

—Did I say that it would cost you suffering? It will. It is usually said that the passion of Christ commenced when He opened the gate that led into the garden of Gethsemane, or as He walked across the little board that spanned the brook of Kidron; but in reality it began the day He was baptized into His calling, in the river Jordan; and we shall see presently that each new dedication of Himself into the kingdom of mystery cost Him a deeper immersion in suffering. Therefore He longed for suffering, though His soul trembled at the contemplation of it, and cried

*And who has never known this, let him steal away in tears from this company. Schiller: Ode to Joy.

out on one occasion, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and how would I that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:49-50.) And after all, is there anything of real value upon this earth which does not have to be won through a struggle? Has there been any progress in the world of thought or culture without a martyrdom? How they hooted at Robert Fulton when his steamship stopped —crazy notion, that a ship could be propelled by steam!—and when Fulton looked at those who lined the shore, his old father was one of those who hooted loudest. The tragedy of Christopher Columbus had to end as it did—it was played down here upon this earth and fellowmen were his fellow-players. All conquest demands sacrifice. I am not extending an invitation to enjoy an easy existence when I urge my young fellow-students to shape their lives according to this motto: It becometh me to fulfill all righteousness! There is always a price that has to be paid if a great goal is to be reached. There is no greater goal than to become one consecrated of God, one who has God's confidence; but the joy that lies in the mystery is not distributed indiscriminately but is won by those who never lose sight of the ideal, and daily order their lives so as to reach it. And each new step forward in spiritual experience, each new experience of the nearness of God and

the riches of the mystery goes hand in hand with a deeper consecration into that which Paul called the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

Does it make so much difference? You were not seeking a job, but a calling and an ideal. And none will say that the cost was too great, when he has seen but a glimpse of the eternal. Nothing can compare with that —all else pales into insignificance. To be sure, it was a very agreeable feeling one had (I remember it still—even physically it was as a pleasant thrill that ran down my backbone) when the professor read one's theme aloud to an auditorium full of people. But O, that evening, when a poor boy who lay dying sent for you, urging you to come at once. You flew down the stairs, heart pounding, and were so overwhelmingly happy. Remember, it was the first time a person had thus asked for help, and you were but nineteen years old. But no lover could have gone with more expectant jubilation to the appointed place than that student, who was permitted to be God's messenger to a poor boy.

The ideal, my fellow-students—be not afraid of that old-fashioned word; hold it fast, strive to attain to it; it may be expressed in that line which the Ideal of all youth placed over His own youth: It becometh me to fulfil all righteousness. And its reward is the Mystery; be not afraid of the Greek-sounding word; it consists in this, that the living God

says to you: You are one of my sons and daughters in whom I find joy—and gives you His Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER IV

John and the Lamb of God: Three Pages from the History of a Human Soul

Not until I became a Christian did the light dawn in my soul, revealing clearly and beautifully to me what a deep and what a rich meaning lies in the expression: The Lamb.
[A Chinese Christian Captain]

I

NEVER has the prophetic spirit attained to a loftier height than in the portrayal of the suffering Messiah—that matchless chapter,* which is so full of beauty and sorrow and grips us alike by its sublimity and suffering.

> He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. . . . But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its

*Isaiah 53:2-7.

shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

These words speak to both mind and heart. And both must be stirred if the truth from God is to get hold of our will. It is not enough that a clear train of thought has become manifest to our understanding; our emotions, that realm in our soul-life which is so often reckoned as of slight importance, must be included. They must give our disposition that degree of warmth and malleability necessary if God's purpose is to be lastingly impressed upon the human will.

But this old prophetic text speaks to the understanding. It forces it to face this question: How can it be that Good Friday has been depicted in so detailed a fashion, a half millenium before Good Friday? With almost photographic exactness, with the raptness of eyewitness, the whole scene is drawn, and even sorrow itself, in all its infinite pain, many cycles before He Himself came and endured it. How can our reason explain this miracle —unless by this, that it was the same Spirit of God who inspired the prophet with this vision and who dwelt in all His fullness in the Son when He came to earth?

But the heart, too, is deeply moved by this picture. Is there a human being who can read these sorrow-filled lines, so graphic in all their simplicity, and not have his emotions violently stirred and his imagination gripped

by what he sees? Is it not as though we saw a loved younger brother being whipped ruthlessly—as though we saw a dear friend being shamefully misjudged by his fellowmen, and finally, maltreated, thrown bleeding at our feet? Feelings like these, or at any rate feelings much akin to them, fill us when we really lose ourselves in this chapter, until the whole scene passes as a reality before our inner eye.

Its depth no man has measured, nor the content of the mystery of Good Friday itself. One will also seek in vain for portrait-like exactness here as was the case in comparing the gospels. But there is a picture, a symbol, which abruptly appears in the description, which is found here for the first time as one of the Savior-symbols which later was to become so precious: the picture of the Lamb. It does away with the enigma raised by reason, and at the same time it grips our heartstrings by the portrayal of innocence and touching beauty which the picture involuntarily awakens in us.

It is of this picture of Jesus as the Lamb of God that this chapter shall treat—though not in the way commonly treated, and not as the author of this book has especially understood it. I am going to try to look at the picture with another's eyes. The apostle John, that disciple whom Jesus loved, because he was the disciple who best understood our Lord, has thrice mentioned Jesus to us as the Lamb

of God. And on each of these three occasions it would seem that a decisive advance has taken place in his own soul. It is as though Christ, by the use of this particular picture, has made the deepest impression upon his soul, or perhaps I should rather say—as though John himself could best express the inexpressible which he felt in his soul when Jesus called forth something new by using this picture of the Lamb of God.

It is of these three inner experiences of the apostle John, which were awakened in him by Jesus as the Lamb of God, that the following shall treat.

II

Bible readers cannot avoid noticing that there is a marked difference between the picture of Christ which we have in the first three gospels and the conception of Jesus Christ which characterizes the fourth gospel. This difference must be neither denied nor erased; it must be recognized; then we should seek an explanation for the difference and profit by it. How this has been done, how, so to speak, a bridge has been built between the Gospel of John and the other three, what the reasons for the differences are, and what all four have in common—all of this lies outside the scope of this chapter. I shall content myself with reminding you of the principal reason for the great dissimilarity. John's Gospel is the most personal of the four; and

it is that very thing which gives this gospel its particular value. One may prefer an excellent photograph to a well-drawn painting; or one may prize the latter in preference to the former. The first three gospels give rather the photographic likeness of Jesus—the fourth is a painting, a marvellous piece of soul-portraiture, both in its conception and its execution. The others tell how Jesus was; John tells what Jesus was to him. Thus his book gives a sort of dual picture of Jesus: it is the historic Jesus, but, mark you, as He was reflected in the disciple who best understood Him. In our day we may differentiate between the historic and the living Jesus, which simply means in the first place the picture the Scriptures draw of Christ and in the second place the reflection which the living Savior causes in every living Christian in whom He has become a reality. John's gospel also shows us Jesus as He was—but especially as He was in and for John. The book is a testimony. It points to the Son of God as a shining focus, but this is seen, usually, in the light of some phase of faith. As the narrative progresses, we are able to see how his own faith has developed, and it is in these glimpses that the eyewitness is so clearly revealed that there does not seem to be the slightest room for doubt as to who the author is. In this way John's gospel is given a double value. It gives a new historical picture of the man Jesus Christ, besides the three we

already have; but it is at the same time a psychological account of the origin and growth of the Jesus-image in John's own soul.

We meet this already in the first chapter, in that fascinating account of how Jesus gathered a whole circle of youths about Himself, and how faith awakened in all of these men, whose names were later to become immortal in the Christian church. One of these men has told of the first meeting between Jesus and His young disciples, as it still lived in his memory after he had become very old. It is an historical document of the highest rank which we here have before us, an eyewitness' story of Jesus' first day with His friends. True, this most unassuming writer does not tell us his name, but he betrays it, nevertheless, by the engaging charm and masterfulness which characterize the story, now in very simple, apparently inconsequential words, now in graphic detail. He says of Andrew, that "he findeth first his own brother," and thus hints that he, also, had a brother whom he later found; and when he has told of the first meeting and exchange of words with the Master, how they followed Him and were bidden to come to His home where they remained all that day—yea, all their life, with Him, he adds: "It was about the tenth hour." They remembered, ever afterward, the very hour—in so vivid a fashion had the whole scene burned itself into his memory, whether according to Roman reckoning it was about

ten o'clock in the morning (our time of morning worship, with its heavens of deepest springtime blue, and the song of larks soaring aloft above fields of flowers), or whether according to the Jewish time, about four o'clock in the afternoon, as the sun was going down and the heavens were of a lighter blue and long shadows lay down over the mountainsides, and the soul was filled with that peculiar peace which belongs to the afternoon hours.

In that passage, then, those first Christ-disciples are painted for us with just a few strokes, gentle of feature, as is often seen on portraits of the extremely young; and in the midst of these youths stands the figure of Jesus, tall, pure, gentle, friendly—and each of these enthusiastic new disciples places upon His brow a laurel wreath, as it were, to honor Him, and gives Him a name.

"Rabbi," which is interpreted "Teacher"—thus did the first two, John and Andrew, address Him, crowning and choosing Him from that hour as their Master, that teacher at whose feet they wanted to sit, and whom they desired to follow for the rest of their lives as faithful disciples. But Simon and Philip lay another wreath upon His head. One said: "We have found the Messiah," and the other calls Him the one "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote," the awaited prophet. They knew their Bible and recognized the Messiah of the Bible in the person of Jesus.

And the hesitant Nathanael, that skeptic who was without guile, lays an even more beautiful wreath, yea, a golden crown, upon His head, for when he experiences how those eyes had read his most deeply hidden thoughts and when therefore he realized who Jesus really was, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel."

But more beautiful than all of these laurel crowns with which youth honored and saluted Him was, after all, the one which John the Baptist had placed upon His brow when he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" In that moment he bound the first wreath of roses upon the cross and uttered aloud the deepest mystery, which as yet none of the young disciples understood: that He was the one who was to bear, upon His heart, all conceivable sin and give up His innocent life in order to save the world.

And that was the word which had first opened the eyes of the disciple John to the person of the Master and caused him to follow after Him—the word about the Lamb, the Lamb of God, that bore the sins of the world.

The passover was close at hand. Flocks of sheep were being driven at that season along every road, from far up in the meadows of Galilee, toward Jerusalem. There they came, jumping over the ditches and into the fields, the shepherd and his boy at the head, the dog behind the flock; unsuspecting, the bleating

flock followed their leader—all of them to be slaughtered for the feast in Jerusalem. But in their innocence they were unaware of this, carefree they nipped the grass along their way. It was this scene that the disciples had before them every day.

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

And they looked, and behold, across the green meadow with its myriad of motley-colored flowers they saw Him coming. His figure showed sharp and clear, as though it were etched against the deep blue of the spring skies. Probably He wore a white turban, and looked at once so inexpressibly mild and likeable and yet so strangely serious and contemplative. For He came from that fearful meeting with Azazel out yonder in the wilderness, whither the Spirit had led Him after that solemn hour at the Jordan; now He was coming to find His calling in that world which was now to meet Him in all its beauty and affliction.

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

And they saw Him, and understood not at all what might be contained in that picture language, but the picture Himself they understood. Involuntarily they were drawn by that strange figure, and they followed Him. Then He turned, and never could they forget that moment, when He asked, "What seek ye?" O, it was in truth He, whom they had been

seeking since earliest youth. That incomparable innocence which shone out from the face of this new and glorious Master and reminded them—yes, of all the little lambs which they saw leaping about them every day; that expression gripped their hearts as none had ever been able to do before—they could not help following Him. For thus it has always been, that where young people come upon purity and innocence, it calls upon the very best in them. And so they could think of no other answer than this: "Rabbi, we should like to see where you live."

"Come, and ye shall see," said He. And they accompanied Him home, and sat down in His room, wherever it was most convenient—on the bed and on the floor, and then He talked with them, and before they realized it the afternoon had sped away and they had become bound to Him so that they could never think of leaving Him.

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

What did John, and what did his comrades, understand by this saying—what did they understand by Christianity that day? O, so very, very little; at all events they could not have told anyone about it. He drew them to Himself, that was all. His innocence, yes, and His simplicity. The fact that He so quickly confided in them, and received them, and looked into their hearts and chose them as His disciples, just as they were. That He

at once recognized two seeking souls in John and his friend and gave them permission to follow Him and open their hearts to Him. That He at once, with that searching, yet loving eye, looked upon the face of Simon the fisherman and read his character in his firm mouth and straightforward gaze—yes, those earnest eyes of Jesus looked far deeper than to the mouth and eyes—and quickly gave him the name Peter, a rock; and believed in him and strengthened his weaker side by giving him that strong and honorable name. And Nathanael, who had at once taken so reserved and dignified a position with regard to Him —of him also Jesus believed the best, and exclaimed, "Behold, here is an Israelite in whom there is no guile"; and when Nathanael asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" (that is to say, "If you had known me, you would not have spoken so well of me!"), Jesus answers, "Under the fig-tree I saw thee (that is, "I know you in your best moments"). Most people think that Nathanael, in the shadow of the fig-tree, has been in prayer for the salvation of Israel and for the coming of the Messiah. I have heard a newer conception: it is said by those acquainted with Israelitish customs that the time of the first fig-harvest was a time of gay festival, similar to our harvest and May Day festivals; many-colored rugs were spread upon the grass in shady places, and there the young people lay, women and men, and sang and laughed and played and were

merry throughout the warm evenings. Nor were these celebrations always characterized by charm and decency. At such times Nathanael has stolen away by himself; he did not want to take part in all their noise and foolery —and one has passed along the road out yonder and has seen this serious, thoughtful youth.

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

The profoundest thing in this saying, the thought of the cross, to this they hardly gave a thought. True, their former master did speak vaguely of His taking away the sin of the world, and this has doubtless gripped them in a peculiar way, just as those things which are too deep for children often grip them most strongly—but what this expression, "the sin of the world," really meant, they did not at all understand; they did not even suspect the depth of their own sin. It was with them as Birkedal's hymn so beautifully expresses it:

"And saw not the cross which the woodlands were hiding." Now it was spring, the time of leafing, their souls' bridal festivity. And if, as it were, an occasional cloud cast its shadow momentarily upon their youthful spirits, as for instance when Jesus spoke, not long afterward, of the days that "will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast"—even this left behind it but a passing spirit of unexplainable sadness; for if they merely looked

upon Jesus, life was again as a festival, and they experienced anew that word of strange promise with which He had consecrated their relationship to Him as disciples: "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." A more festal archway had none ever builded for his friends: whither they went, as His followers, those regions would be peopled by white, friendly beings, who bore messages between the opened heavens and their Master.

* * *

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

Acknowledge this, O youth—ye are not at home, ye are not at ease, in the midst of sin and impurity. There was always that in your character which wanted to turn away therefrom in intense disgust and aversion; and when you had not conquered the temptation, you were always left with a feeling of heavy bitterness. But when on our life's way we did meet with one of these rare souls, whose face bore the indescribable impress of purity and innocence, of frank, radiant fearlessness, we were drawn to him involuntarily and irresistibly. Am I mistaken in saying that there was something of this sort about Niels Finsen? Robert Wilder had it, at all events. Well, if it be true that youth naturally loves innocence—who, I ask you, should attract them more than Jesus Christ? And if the

cross he still hidden, if you have as yet no particular disposition or feeling for the gospel of the cross, if you do not yet believe that the deep tones that speak of sin and grace can harmonize aright with your happy songs of youth, well, then, in God's name lift your eyes and behold the Lamb of God: where have you met another who was wiser, more compelling, more lovable, finer, than Jesus Christ—and so radiantly pure, so unspeakably innocent? Make Him the hero of your youth, and follow Him as closely as you can!

If it is possible to speak with any degree of truth of a gospel for youth in our day, it must consist herein: that in our preaching of the gospel to our young people we put Jesus as the ideal into the foreground, more than Jesus as the Redeemer. It should go without saying that this is but a nuance, a stressing of one side of the same subject; for the gospel is a unit and is the same for young and old. If this is understood, we may properly let this characterization stand.

I shall add only this, which deepens its significance. We do not merely say to youth: Thus He was—follow His example! But we add: Thus He is today—entrust yourselves therefore to Him! He is not simply the hero of the young; He would be their familiar friend. In just this way did John and the other youths look upon Him that day. It was not only His innocence that attracted them to Him; it was just as much His simplicity,

His loving spirit of understanding. Let that spirit also draw you to Him, for that is something you need. You know it is true that this is one of the things you need most strongly and for which your gratitude is almost boundless, wherever you find it: this loving spirit of understanding. I know that it is so. It wins a young person's confidence and gratitude for life when he meets sincere understanding in another, especially in his critical periods; and there are few things he so seldom finds. The admonitions of his elders may be entirely well-intentioned—the only objection against them is that they do so very little good; at times, indeed, they simply complicate matters and make it all seem more hopeless than ever. It was truly not in a spirit of mischief, but right out of an overburdened, perplexed heart that a little ten-year-old boy said to his mother when, for perhaps the twentieth time, she forbade his doing something or other, "Mother, please don't tell me any more things I mustn't do, today, for I can't remember them all!" People become tired and lose courage when they are continually pelted with admonitions. But no one says a word about that which is really wrong with them. As Christian Winther says: "My deepest wound was all unnoted."

"My young daughter tells me everything—I can read her like a book." And do you really believe that, madam? Yet you do not know that before she comes into the room, she

bathes her eyes once more and looks into the mirror to make sure it cannot be noticed that she has been weeping, and smiles at her reflection and pats her hair, and enters with a radiant face: "There comes our little sunbeam!" Look at Jarl's beautiful statue in the Art Gallery. I think it is called "Clipped Wings," but when it first appeared in Paris it had a better name: "Le secret fatal." There he stands, this earnest, pensive youth, with tightly-clasped hands, his posture as though he were weighing something and that something his own fate: that which I now choose will be the ruin of my life or its greatest happiness. The fateful secret—O, how many of our youth are there who are not acquainted with it?

So come, then, O young people, with your painful secret, your perplexed spirit, your bitter feeling of being helplessly forsaken—here is one who understands you, a guileless One who thinks better of you than you do of yourself, although He knows you through and through. Tell it to Him; He will not let it go farther, and He will not despise you, no matter what you have to tell Him. For He knew it all before you told Him, and was only waiting for you to come and confide in Him, so that He might help you.

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!

These youths saw Him and followed Him, even though He led them along the strangest

ways. They took Him as their hero and leader and He became their Savior. They were drawn by His innocence and simple-heartedness, and ended at the cross. But it began with the Lamb of God.

III

It would come soon enough, that tragic cross. Also John had to undergo a ripening process before he was ready for it. For neither could he remain standing at that first youthful impression of Christ and that which Christ brought. Fair springtime passed, and the long, beautiful summer; then the wild wind of harvest time commenced to blow. Leaf after leaf was torn from the foliage of youth and happiness, until it stood there in all its simple, wretched nakedness, that dismal cross. The evil day had come when the bridegroom was taken away from him. That great heart, which had radiated love, inexhaustible and rich, warmer and stronger than ever before, that last evening and night—it was at last broken. Dumbly suffering, John had stood and looked upon his friend's affliction, and more than this we can seldom do for our stricken friends. Then he had gone home, as had the others, to brood over his sorrow.

But he could not stay at home. When they had all gone away, and when Jesus had fought the battle through, John turned back once more and stood before the cross of his dead Master. Why had he come? Was it to assure

himself once more concerning that dreadful thing, which it seemed he could not believe —that he was dead? Did he simply want to stand there and look up into that beloved face? Or was he determined to stand as a guard of honor over his Master's corpse, to drive away greedy vultures and rooks? I do not know; but as he stood there, lost in contemplation, he witnesses a horrible thing. The Roman soldiers appear with their maces and commence to crush the bones of the two crucified malefactors. It was a species of compassion, in order to end more quickly the sufferings of the unfortunates. John is horrified—surely they are not coming over here. O, they will not come to violate his Master's precious body! But look, they have halted; they can see that He is dead, and are speaking of how quickly death came, all unconcerned, for that matter; one of them carelessly thrusts his lance into Jesus' side, and blood and water flow forth, the unmistakable sign of death.

Then he who long years afterward told of it breaks the thread of the story and cries out jubilantly, "And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe" (John 19:35).

These are his words, jubilant and assuring. And surely it is plain that something took place in his own soul on the day on which that which he relates occurred, and that now he desires to impress it upon us.

That which follows shows what had happened in John's soul. For immediately he adds: "For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19:36-37).

As he stands there before the cross in the gathering twilight, beholding all that was happening—the bones of the others being crushed, but not the Savior's—a picture emerges from memory: The Feast of the Passover at home when he was a child—the lamps were lighted, and the room was filled with the spirit of festive joy, and the unleavened loaves and bitter herbs stood upon the table, and—what was the most remarkable thing of all—the little Passover lamb that was roasted whole, its bones were not crushed. He sees the whole scene before him: old father Zebedee is telling the listening children and fisher-boys about the angel of death who went past the blood-marked door posts of all the homes in which the Passover lamb had been slain. And dimly, as though but faintly sensed, the thought went through his soul: The Passover lamb, what if it should have been God's thought that He who still hung there upon the cross was the slain Passover Lamb, and that He was there because it was God's purpose, in order to redeem us from the sin of the world. And when the lance pierces His side, another of the ancient prophecies glimmers faintly in his soul:

"They shall look unto me whom they have pierced"; thus does the book of Zechariah speak of the Messiah, the rejected shepherd. O, what if this crucified Master, rejected by His people, should after all be the Messiah, God's holy One!

And this faith which thus began to dawn out there before the cross, burst forth in a glorious sunrise Easter morning inside the empty grave. Then it was that the two disciples, Peter and John, ran a race. Peter was perhaps the heavier of the two, or perhaps he was the older. At all events John was there first, but stopped a moment outside the grave; he may have wanted to wait for his friend who was still running, down yonder on the path, or perhaps he wanted to take a moment to gain control of himself before he entered, for now was the critical time—death or life! In a moment I shall know positively if the victory is won or if all is lost! If it was Peter he was waiting for, he got scant thanks for his pains, for Peter, in true Petrine style, rushed past John and straight into the grave. Then the other followed and saw with Peter how the chamber was empty, and the clothes lying in orderly fashion, piece by piece, as though laid there by one who calmly and resolutely has laid aside his grave-clothes. And then we read, "He saw, and believed." For he adds, "They knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." (John 20:8-9.) For now the Easter sun was rising

in his heart, yea, breaking through in victory. It was with that faith that these two disciples continued their race, out into the world, each striving to win the greater number of souls for their crucified and arisen Savior. And they ran well, and John ran longest, and when he wrote his epistle as an old bishop in Ephesus, he could write: "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith."

And this faith had been awakened by the Lamb of God. For it died when He died; and it was only when that casual little occurrence —His bones not being crushed—reminded him of the slain Passover lamb, that the dead faith began to rise unto new life. All the way to the cross he had to go in order to become a mature Christian man. There at the cross he had to learn that the kernel and crown of Christianity is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

* * *

Whence have I this—is it a picture or a story: of two children walking hand in hand in a great forest—a little boy and his sister who was just a bit older? It was harvest-time, and so there was a constant rain of gently falling leaves, yellowed leaves, falling silently. Suddenly the boy burst into tears. "What are you crying for?" asked his sister. "I am crying because all the leaves are falling," answered the boy. "You must not cry about that, little brother," was the comforting

answer, "for when the leaves fall, we can see heaven so much better."

Some of us have experienced this. When the wild storms of autumn raged through our lives, sweeping away the leaves of the forest and playing with our broken happiness, chilling us to the heart, it stood there, now that all the foliage was withered and torn—the dark and naked cross, very, very near. Then it was that we learned that our only refuge both from lust and from pain was the cross. Standing there we saw Heaven much more plainly.

Now I am not thinking of anything magical. At times one hears a sermon which centers upon the cross, in which the blood and the cross are used almost as though they were magical formulae which were infallibly potent. True it is that where the gospel of the cross was preached faithfully and simply, something did happen, and souls were really saved; and it is true that the heart of every sermon should be a depiction of Jesus the crucified; and every Christian does wisely if he has a daily Calvary-period, in which he consciously and earnestly calls to remembrance the fact that Christ's death counts also for that particular day and its sin. But this cross must not be separated from all the rest of the Savior's life, the constant goal of which was the cross; neither must it be separated from the living Savior Himself, who won the victory upon His cross and now has power to save as the risen and

ascended Lord; and least of all is it to be separated from our own daily life, which must always be lived in the shadow of the cross of Jesus.

A Christianity without the cross is a childish stage which cannot remain thus throughout a lifetime. Just how much of the religion of the cross must be consciously appropriated no man can decide; nor can we fix the number of thoughts concerning it and their degree of clearness. But the time must come when the "soul for His righteous judgment was trembling, when dimmed were my eyes and my vision was darkened, since unto the tempter my spirit had "hearkened," and then it is that the shadow of Jesus' cross falls across our life. When we must bear our heavy cross, with both the shame and anguish we have called down upon ourselves by our own sin, and those bitter sufferings which we, as Christians, must pass through, we have not enough in a Christ who was the ideal and confidential friend of our youth. We need a whole Savior, none other than Him who "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead." That is a new and far more solemn view of the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" —also my sin. That view is gained through hard experiences; but after that time we see Heaven much more clearly.

IV

Then came a Sunday, long afterward, when John, stricken in years, sat as an exile upon the island of Patmos. Wherever he turned, his eye saw always the sea, that greedy sea that had swallowed so many men, fathers and sons—that deceitful sea which played so blue and sparkling in the morning and before evening frothed wildly—that endless sea which separated him from all of his beloved congregations. In Heaven there was to be no sea. Then it was that he was caught up in the Spirit and beheld those mighty, changing scenes from the future of God's Kingdoms and the glory of Heaven, as it is written in the Book of Revelation.

One of the scenes was this. A door was opened in Heaven, and in Heaven stood a throne. The One who sat upon the throne shone with the radiance and splendor of precious stones, and an emerald-green rainbow was vaulted above Him. Elders with golden crowns upon their heads, and strange creatures, and worlds of angels worshipped Him. Seven blazing torches burned before Him, and a crystal-clear sea of glass glistened in the heavenly sanctuary. But in His right hand the One who sat upon the throne held a scroll. It was inscribed upon both sides, but rolled up and securely sealed with seven seals. And when an angel with a mighty voice cried out, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to

loose the seals thereof?" there was a breathless silence, for "no one in the Heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon."

Now the apostle did so sincerely desire that the book should be opened and interpreted. He had a presentiment that it was the Book of Fate for God's people and for the whole world, and that the future, even eternity, depended upon its contents. And as a child may cry plaintively in its sleep, so the old apostle, John, in the course of the vision, burst into bitter tears because none was found worthy to open the Book and solve its riddle. Then one of the crowned elders spoke kindly to him, saying: "Weep not; behold, the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof." And the old man, comforted, stared out nto the expanse of the heavens through tear-dimmed eyes. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah had conquered. As to who that was he had no doubts; surely now He must come and break the seals and interpret the book. Doubtless he expected to see the mighty lion, fierce-eyed and with a proud mane, stalk across the vault of heaven. But look, there, right between the throne and the elders, stood a little Lamb, wounded as if it had been slain: that was the conquering lion of Judah; it took its place before the throne and received the fateful book from God's hand. At this all of the elders fell down before the Lamb; each

held his harp and goldenbowls filled with incense, and these were the prayers of the saints. And they began a new song, saying: "Worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." And millions of angels burst forth throughout all the worlds with a mighty sound: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And all created things joined in the song and praised Him who sat upon the throne, and the Lamb, in all eternity'*

Yes, it was again that Lamb of God which he had seen on that very first day, when he was young, which had quickly caused him to become His disciple, never to forsake Him—it was that Lamb of God he had suddenly recognized, in his deepest sorrow and need, as the slain passover lamb—He it was, the same Lamb of God, that he now, as an old man, knew again—the little white Lamb with the sinister red wound; the slain Lamb of God, He was the conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who now held the fate of the world in His hand, who alone was able to divine the world-riddle and had been chosen to break the seals and open the book and guide all times and generations. We were in His hands, then, in the hands of the Lamb of God.

*Revelation 5.

As he had seen Him on that first spring day, so did he see Him at the last, in late harvest. The innocent, itinerant Rabbi; the crucified, unappreciated Savior; He had now become the Lord of the world, and all three were one and the same, the slain Lamb of God, that bore the sin of all the world. That last, heavy sorrow: what is to become of us all, of God's people and of the whole unfortunate world—**that** the Lamb of God had also taken from him. For the third time the Lamb had crossed his path and become the joy of his life.

* * *

Can you see yourself sitting weeping over your book? It was the multiplication table, or those exercises in geometry which you could not manage. True, these childhood troubles did not last long, but they were tearful and heart-rending while they lasted, and I would wish that I might spare my own dear ones from as many as possible of them.

Later on in life we found ourselves in bitter tears over a trying book. This time it was our own Book of Fate, whose seal we could not understand, and whose characters we so greatly feared. Right early an experience may be encountered upon life's way, that makes us sit and think! Now I can never be happy again. This was the worst that could have happened. Sometimes one meets people who seem almost to attract misfortune and sorrow: they actually seem to heap themselves up

over these unfortunates. Alas, how much a human being does at times have to lose!

Nor can a Christian, in the long run, remain indifferent to that which is taking place about him. But it is a dreadful book to have anything to do with: who is able to break its seals? Many and depressing are the hours that lie in wait for him who really desires to commence to ponder over the Book of Human Fate. For we have made it dreadfully hard for each other, down here upon the earth.

Only consider for a moment the sufferings found in Heathenism. Our missionaries can at times tell us a little about them. Often they are obliged to witness the sight of a little Chinese maiden who has become a Christian, being given into the hands of a heathen to whom she has been sold as a wife while yet a child. They know what awaits her, and she knows also. If they should chance to see her a year later, they would see marks of the lash upon her, and her poor feet are broken and bound. Yet she is but one out of millions. Or think of what hides behind the word "war". For it is not theatrical warfare, with handsome uniforms, and blank cartridges, and much jingling and clanking. No; rather a battle field whence unceasingly wild cries of pain and horror and madness are rising, and an awful stench over it all. I cannot forget a photograph I saw in an illustrated magazine in 1899. It showed a great transport as it was steaming out from an English port, bearing

fresh troops. There they stood, shoulder to shoulder, by the thousand, along the rail, nodding with radiant faces at their dear ones on shore. I say to you that they seemed to be clean, 16-year-old boys, O so young, and yet, what did it all mean? Cattle, led to the slaughter, cannon fodder, all appointed to be picked off by the guns of the Boers. I stood outside Port Arthur one warm Spring day; little blue flowers that resembled lavender distilled their spicy fragrance in the sunshine, as if that was the most peaceful spot in all the world; but yonder there was something white, shining, either the rib of a horse or man, and all that hilly landscape was pocked by grenades; and a little Japanese was zealously explaining: Under this place lie 300 Japanese; see, we were laying mines to the Russian fortifications, but they discovered us, and began to tunnel underneath us in order to blow us up. But their blast was timed too soon, and all it did was to make a great hole, through which we poured our forces—but a great section of the cement wall fell upon our men and crushed 300 of them—and crushed 300 young men, who just before had pulsated with warm life, and not long before had stood in the little temples in their home towns and clapped their hands and pulled the bell-rope, praying to the god for protection. Yes, this is war; that a few detestable old diplomats who could not be content to roll about in their coaches peddling calling cards at each other's

doors, and who are not satisfied to wade goutily about upon each other's Brussels rugs or to play bridge—these spread out a map and decide to play at war. And, mark you, they do not play themselves—of that they are always very careful—but they send out all that fresh and promising multitude of youths, for, they know not what purpose—to be slaughtered alive in far-off, unknown places by men whose enemies they had never been.

Or think of the sufferings which want and injustice bring upon men even in times of peace, very near the place where you live. He who has read Kropotkin's Memoirs and Stepniak's book, can never forget the young Russian students who lie bleeding, cut almost in two by Cossack sabers, in the light-rooms of St. Petersburg's streets, or the noble princes and ignorant peasants who are tortured in the prisons until they lose their minds. We have countrymen south of our borders whose children are beaten by German school teachers because they have chanced to say a word in their own mother tongue; what must not their parents suffer! And even here at home we have great, strong men who are slowly starving—they are without work month after month, they cannot find anything to do—it is neither laziness nor drunkenness, but the desperate social conditions; I talked with many of them during last winter and found them splendid fellows. Add to all that I have mentioned, the things which many animals

must endure, animals that are not even able to reason. I can see yet a wretched mule that was hitched to a cartload of great stones, and had to climb a steep road; it had a large open sore near the hock, and two Italians were raining blows down upon it in order to make it go. It stood dumbly and endured the blows.

Woe unto us—how have we acted toward each other—who shall be able to read that desperate Book of Fate and break its dreadful seals?

The Lamb, dear friend. The slain Lamb, who knows the meaning of suffering and who has Himself shared it with us, and who is now exalted upon the throne, and who is able to break the seals and open the Book—He will do it.

We need to have this hope revived among us; we hear all too little of it from our pulpits and when we speak to each other.

On this earth we shall never learn to understand sufferings. Nevertheless, I say, it is a thousand times better to endure them or even to watch others endure them, and have God with us, than to suffer all alone. For He has compassion on us; and He has a purpose in our sufferings, and is able, at last, to do all things well for us. In Jesus' Name, then, let us bear what we must bear, and see to it that we are as kind toward each other as we possibly can be, rather lending a helping hand to those who are suffering than spending time trying to reason out these enigmas of life.

For the time will come when God shall also say to us: Now then, dry your eyes; it is all over; enter in, and rejoice in my Paradise. There shall no bird die, nor shall a single branch be broken.

Nevertheless, each time we pass by in the neighborhood of Jesus we shall recognize Him, even in His glorified appearance, by the scars which shall never disappear. That is the Lamb of God—"as though it had been slain." And then shall our soul say to Him yet once more: I thank Thee, Thou blessed One; for unto Thee and Thy scars alone do I owe my thanks, that finally I am, nevertheless, come hither.

CHAPTER V

Simon Peter and the Heavenly Vision: Points of Agreement in Conversions

Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

—Paul.

I

THERE are exceedingly few mortals who have seen Heaven; but the Prophet Isaiah was in Heaven for a moment, in a vision. Long afterward he remembered accurately the year in which this took place; it was in the year King Uzziah died, which must have been, according to our reckoning, about the year 740 before the birth of Christ.

When he later recalled the vision and told of it, there were four stages which were clear in his recollection, and these were accompanied by corresponding changing states of mind.

First of all he saw God, and dwelt in marvel upon the heavenly vision. The Holy One of Israel was enthroned upon a mighty dais, and the train of His garment filled the sanctuary. Gentle seraphs surrounded Him; with two pairs of wings they honored God, and with one pair they did fly. Thrice holy declared they Jehovah, so that the foundations of the thresholds shook thereat, and they sang of God's glory which fills all the earth.

Terror unlike any he had ever experienced gripped the prophet, and at the same moment he was granted a glimpse of his real self, as if revealed by a stroke of lightning. Surrounded by such dazzling purity, he became aware that he, himself, was unclean, through and through. He was a sinner from head to foot. His quivering lips were unclean; the nation from which he had sprung was an unclean nation.

But just then his eye fell upon the high altar of Heaven. A clear and quiet fire burned upon it. And one of the seraphs flew thither and seized with a fire-tongs a live coal from the fire and touched the prophet's lips with it. It neither pained nor burned him; rather, it refreshed and cleansed him, and the voice of the angel sounded in his ear: "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven."

And calm and collected, he listened to the voice of the Lord. It asked: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" A willingness, joyous and courageous, arose in the heart of the prophet. He beheld his life calling, and offered himself for the service. "Here am I; send me!" he cried, and so received his mission at God's hand. Hard was the road that lay before him; he was to warn his apostate of impending punishment and destruction. Yet there was a tiny ray of hope therein: from one of the charred stumps that would be standing after the forest had burned, a little green

shoot would spring forth; a remnant was to be saved.

With this calling he went out to his work and was faithful toward his heavenly vision until the end.

II

And there came a morning, a good seven hundred years thereafter, when a young fisherman also saw God. That is to say, he was not caught up into Heaven, nor did he see the form of the Invisible One; God came to him and stepped aboard his boat. Something happened to him in which God plainly had a hand.

All through the long dark night he had been out on the sea, and he had caught nothing. Now he lent his boat to the new teacher from Nazareth, of whom everyone had so much to say. He put out a little from the land in response to the wish of the Rabbi, and there he lay in the shelter of the sail listening to Him as He spoke to the multitudes yonder upon the shore. Then it was that the Master proposed to him that he should let down his nets for a draught. To be sure, he was of the opinion that he, himself, knew more of fisherlore than the stranger, and he made a few objections, but nevertheless he did cast out his nets at the Master's word. Then it came! Such a tremendous catch, such an unbelievably large shoal of fish, that he was obliged to call out for help from the company in the

other boat, and even at that, their net was ready to break. And like a flash the thought came to the fisherman: It is God. Such a thing had never happened to him before. Of course, he had known God all along; he knew that it was God who lit the thousand stars up yonder upon the night-heavens, those stars which he so often had looked at from his little boat; he knew that it was God who had created the reddish mountains that rimmed the mirror-like sea; and he had aften, of a Sabbath, heard His Word read from the scroll from the cupboard in the Synagogue. But close to him, to his own boat, God had never come—as now, in the moment when the miracle took place.

And then it was that Simon saw **himself** for the first time, saw himself as he was, in God's light. O yes, to be sure he knew himself, after a fashion. Many a morning, as he leaned out over the side of the boat and washed his face, he had seen himself in that clear watery mirror—a handsome, sunburned youth. Well did he know what he could do, for he was known as the bravest man in that whole district. Men said that he was like a rock in his make-up. True, he had his faults; he was quick-tempered, and once in a while he would lose courage; and when this happened, he would lose it completely. She knew it, she who sat at home with his mother, awaiting him; yet there were none he loved more than these two. Yes, he had often thought of these things as he

sat mending his nets or sorting his fish on the sea-shore; but now for the first time he understood it in all its dreadful, infinite wretchedness. This dark night that had just ended was a picture of his life right up to that very hour: toiled all night and took nothing! Took nothing! It was all so empty, so defiled, so awfully dark. Lord, depart from me! Depart from me; for I am a sinful man. All that is in me is sin! Now I see it all; God has come out here upon the deep to find me and punish me, and I am lost!

But One touched his head, very, very gently. And Peter lay at the Master's feet and hid his face in his hands and sobbed like a child, great, rough, strong man though he was. At last he dares to look up; hesitating, trembling, with eyes blinded by tears, he looks into that face. That face—now he really saw it for the first time—which he was to love so much and never forget. Those eyes gave him courage. They shone with a light at once strong and mild, as though they might have been lighted at the glowing high-altar of Heaven. So good, so gentle, so majestic He appeared. "Fear not," said He; and none could say it as He. And at once the words made all fear leave Peter's heart. The night had passed; the King of Morning stood in his boat. He had seen Jesus. The Rabbi from Nazareth, the Master, whom he had heard, and whom he had desired to follow—He was his Savior. "Fear not," said He; "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

"Thou shalt catch men." And he shaded his eyes with his sunburned hand, this young fisher, and stood looking far out over the sea, and beyond. The sea, this clear little sea of Galilee, seemed changed to the great, open ocean, swarming with shoals of fish. Thither was the rendezvous—thither would he sail in compliance with that kingly word, to draw human souls from its depths. A long, bright working-day lay before him, a life in service. The Master had confidence in him. He was not to be sent away to a school first to be trained; he was not to be put on trial for a half-year to see if he could improve himself. No; just as he was, that selfsame morning, he had been taken into service as a disciple. He had seen his calling and had accepted it gladly and willingly. He forsook all and followed Him.

III

And yet it turned out to be a school after all. A hard schooling, with much that was difficult to grasp, a school in which one was at times put into the dunce's corner. Nevertheless, it was a delightful school, with much freedom, always under the open skies, and with the best schoolmaster in all the world, a friend who never tired of him.

That which he had experienced that morning in a moment's time was to be experienced anew many times during the years that were to come. It was a vision which had been

vouchsafed him in his life's festive hour; and now life consisted in this: not to be disobedient toward that vision. It had been a "morning gift," bestowed in kingly, undeserved grace; but now the great thing was to achieve, through a life of service, as it were by conquest, that which he had seen in that moment, and make it his own possession. It had been revealed to him once for all, unforgettably, in order that he should never lose courage when, later on, other long, unemployed nights should come. Invisible hands had held a radiant crown before his eyes; and he would run until he had won it.

He had seen God that morning. But there were to come times later in his life when God should have vanished completely, as though He did not exist. Where was God that night when the storms and frothing billows buffeted his little boat, and the wet, cold depths yawned below, as if to swallow him? Where was God when the One he loved and yet deserted hung bleeding upon His cross, while he crouched in tearless pain? Where was God the time he lay in chains in the prison in Jerusalem, trembling at the thought of Herod's hatred? No, God was not to be seen. But that morning He had been on board his boat —he was sure of it; and so it was possible He might come again. And He did come, again and again, yet more glorious and more distinct than that day on the beach. There was one night upon the mountain that he

liked to tell about right up to his last days (2 Peter 1), an unspeakably happy, waking dream, in which, drunk with joy, he had spoken as though asleep and offered the use of his able hands: "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" There was one night upon the sea, the same night which also had those dark memories—that night he had walked with these feet out over the wild waves, had walked as far and as long as his faith lasted. And the night in prison when it looked as though it would be his last night, the angel had come and had touched him gently on the side and awakened him and led him, bewildered as he was, out through the gates and along the quiet, darkened streets, until he was among friends again. Surely, since that first morning he had often lost God from view—only to find Him again.

And he had seen **himself** that morning as never before; he had seen **his sin** and it terrified him. And yet a gracious God spared him from the sight of the full depth of depravity —else he had died in the same moment or gone insane from fright and sorrow. All of this was to be revealed little by little, as his eyes were able to bear the sight. Through a long life he was to learn thoroughly to lose confidence in himself. We are all such remarkable mixtures, such unaccountably paradoxes; and he was no exception. He was molded on gigantic lines, who can deny it—did he not

forsake all that morning in order to follow Him? And yet he could be so very small in his calculations at times: "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" and "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" This was what he had to learn—and lay aside; and without doubt he did learn it finally, when the vision of the sheet coming down from heaven was shown him on the roof of Simon the Tanner's house, and it was borne in upon him that one ought not be a respecter of persons, since all were alike in the eyes of God; who sees things in the large and is no narrow little Jew-god.* And he was courageous, yes, but at times arrogant; and at other times he was completely lacking in courage, a coward and a craven. Many left the Master the time He had difficult words concerning the Bread of Life which was His flesh—but if all the world should leave Him, he, Peter, would stay: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." That was courageous. He seized his sword that last, evil night, and struck off the high priest's servant's ear, and he went all the way into the court of the high priest where the guardsmen sat about a fire—that was courageous. He stood forth on the roof that Pentecost morning when the streets were swarming with people who had helped murder

*. . . unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common or unclean. (Acts 10:28.)

his Master, and the mockers accused him of having drunk too much — and fearlessly he made confession of the death, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. He was quick to answer when the judges tried to close his mouth and threatened to use the rod. "We must obey God rather than men," said he—that was courageous. But at times he would have too much confidence in himself, and it was at such a time that he gave his Master good counsel about sparing Himself, and then he solemnly made his pledge that even though all the others forsook Him, he would not fail, but was ready to die with Him. It was the evening when Jesus said to him: "Do thou, when once thou hast turned again . . ." i. e., when once you have gotten beyond this; and we know that bitter tears had to be shed before he had learned to know himself and his pride was broken. After that night I do not think he ever had high thoughts concerning himself or made big claims; on the other hand he did, at times, become suddenly fearful and would pay altogether too much attention to what folks thought. It was for this that Paul, later on, took him smartly to task in Antioch (Galatians 2). I do not like the idea of calling this his "second fall," and it almost seems to me as if it is sin in Paul thus to tell it to the Galatians and to the rest of us; but it was a weakness in Peter, and so late in life did he need to be reproached for it and to fight against it.

For it takes a whole lifetime to plumb the depths of one's own heart.

And it was Jesus he saw that morning, and he believed in Him. But there was still much which he did not understand, but which he should, as time went on, learn to know in living with Him. He can help me, He likes me; this he understood. But just who was He, and what did He want? Life itself would teach him these things. A couple of years afterward he made his happy confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—that was something he could not have said that first morning. Now he knew who He was; the heavenly Father had revealed that to him during those years of life together; but as yet he did not understand what it was He wanted to do. He did not want to understand it. He was thoroughly opposed to what Jesus had said of death and the cross. That was something that life—and death—would have to teach him. But there is nothing that touches me so in reading the letters of Peter as to see that the note which goes through everything is this: We must suffer, in order that we may be glorified. This could be set as a motto over the first epistle of Peter: Through Sufferings to Glory. And the three times he brings Jesus Christ before his readers it is the suffering Savior he wants to show them. He is the Lamb, who bought us with His blood—therefore we are to walk warily (Chapter 1). He reviled not again and

threatened not, but "bare our sins in his body upon the tree"—He it is whom we are to follow! (Chapter 2.) And He bore patiently the contradictions of sinners, was crucified, and descended into the land of death, but was raised up of God and exalted above all angel powers—that is also the way for us! (Chapter 3.) It becomes plain that for each year of Peter's earth-life he was granted a deeper vision of his suffering Savior, right up to the moment when he glorified Him by his own death.

Thus his life became a constant establishment in that calling which he had seen, as a youth, that morning. Always he turned back to that; and always his Lord led his thoughts thither. When he had had a great experience and made so confident a confession that Jesus did not try to hide His own joy over it, the Master would say: Yes, you have something of the rock in your nature; upon you I will build my church. When his thoughts had soared too high and Jesus had to remind Him of the fateful struggle that was being waged for his poor soul, with the wild desire of Satan on the one hand and the Savior's faithful intercession on the other, He added, "and . . . when once thou hast turned again (i. e. have put off this spirit), establish thy brethren." And that last morning, on the shore of the lake, when the joy of seeing his Savior once more and the shadows of the evil memories billowed through his soul, and Jesus asked three times—alas,

three times—"Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" He adds each time, "Tend my sheep." And then we see him laying the foundation of the church on Pentecost and opening the doors of the Christian church to the first heathen, Cornelius, and acting as spokesman for Gentile freedom at the spirited apostolic council in Jerusalem (Acts 15)—then to disappear out in the great sea of peoples during many years of faithful, unrecorded labor, until, toward the end of his life-work, we find the old fisher of men writing his last, strong letters from Rome or Babylon, through which letters he still labors among us.

IV

All conversion must commence with a heavenly vision.

All movement away from the ways of the world and the sway of self toward a holy life before the face of God—and that is what conversion is—must be based on this, that the soul has heard God calling and has been impressed by His reality; otherwise it would never occur to anyone to be in earnest as to conversion.

God must pass us on our way, as on that morning when He went aboard Simon Peter's boat. Something must occur through which we may clearly see that the hand of the invisible God is in the event.

Most people will recognize such moments

in their lives when they think back carefully over the past.

It may happen suddenly and with an apparent connection with one's past; thus it came to Saul of Tarsus and Jakob Peter Mynster in Spjellerup. It was really just as surprising and indisputable in each instance as a direct act of God, with but the difference there is between a road to Damascus and a sofa in a corner in a Danish parsonage. It was God who revealed His Son in them—for one through a celestial vision, for the other as he sat reading a book, a book, mark you, that did not seem to have the remotest connection with the inward phenomenon which shone as a light in his soul.

Such things happen from time to time in all ages to God's chosen instruments, or in order that men shall stop and think things through.

In most cases, however, the soul is awakened to see God and experience His nearness through the Word of God as it meets men in a living declaration of the gospel or in a personal testimony. They feel that these are not ordinary human words, that they make a different impression upon them from all else they have heard, that the one who speaks to them stands in a personal relationship to the living God. They feel that the church to which they have come is not simply a casual group of like-minded people, but people who hold invisible values in common. Their singing and their fellowship proclaim that they

are assembled about a living God. And they feel as did the patriarch, "Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not."

And then one will experience something similar to that which happened both to Isaiah in his heavenly vision, and to Simon Peter that morning in his trawler: in God's clear light, in a flash, they saw themselves as never before. Themselves—that is to say, their sin.

It seems hardly believable, but it is nevertheless so, that one of the hardest things in this world is to get people to see their sin. Pharisaism is a great power still, and I have seen it more in the short time I have been a pastor than in the many years I was a worker among young people. Doubtless the young folks have their great faults—they are often frivolous, and generally speaking not dependable; but as a rule they are not pharisaical—at a certain age, even, they have a strong, sensitive consciousness of sin. And even though it is often but an individual sin they see, while they do not realize that everything, even in their best moments, in naive innocence is centered in self—even though the motive for their struggle is fear of their own ruin rather than repentance toward God—the very fact that they are fighting this one thing in dead earnest has its own value and may lead to much more. But it is appalling how, with the passing of years, men can lose the power of seeing their own sin. They disarm all effort by such remarks as these: "We are living de-

cently," "We have gone through so much," "My husband is hard-working and our children are always dressed neat and clean," or in other classes thus, "We are not any worse than the others," "I don't see that we are such terribly great sinners." It was Heuch who said so truly that while the Pharisee of old praised himself for all the good he had done, the Pharisees of our time praise themselves because they have done nothing. At times I have tried to tell hardened Pharisees what a great sinner I, myself, was—with only this result, that they appeared to feel a sort of pity for me.

No, in the last analysis the Word of God is the only thing that can show men their sin. Therefore it is written that the Holy Spirit will convict the world in respect of sin.

And even that may be a long and gradual process, for it is a long way to the bottom of a human soul. A man may be thoroughly dissatisfied with himself, but as long as it is but an unfruitful melancholy, he is no better off than the smiling sinner who gaily pursues his way, sinning against Heaven. And a sinner may treat himself vilely: "If you knew," said a young student to me, "if you knew what I have used this hand for, I don't think you would ever give me your hand again." Alas, poor lad, I gave him my hand willingly, but I doubt he will ever offer it to me again, for he gave up the struggle, and what is worse,

I doubt that his situation now, after so many years, is much better. Indeed, one may become furious at oneself and upbraid oneself for the most abominable things—but does this really make one better? Varus will not return with his legions, no matter how much the emperor knocks his head against the wall. After all, it is but injured self-love, which is mortified at its impotence—it is the Pharisee despising himself and offended at his own sin.

I cannot help thinking of a young chap who sat in my room weeping bitterly; he did not even use his handkerchief, but let the tears fall, one after another, upon the carpet. "Well," I asked, "how do things look to you?" He did not answer, but stared straight ahead. "Is there some certain thing that troubles you, or does it seem to be—just everything?" "It is everything," he answered. It was everything. And it was well for him that it was everything, though he could not realize it at that time: it was no small step forward in the understanding of self. "The enemies have laid all waste in the sanctuary."*

The worst enemy is selfishness. After all, Skat-Rørdam was right when, in his sermons in Holmen's Church, he kept coming back to this: sin is selfishness. If one once sees this truth, it will seem to him as it did to Paul, that he is worse than all the others. Really it would not seem to be so difficult to achieve this result. I know so very little about the

*Adapted from Psalm 74:3.

others, and they will be very careful to hide the worse; you may be sure that carnival time is not the only time when one goes about masked. But, before my own conscience, I am discovered, indeed terribly recognized in my overweening selfishness.

I just mentioned Paul. There is hardly a more gripping account anywhere of sin-burdened man than in the last half of the seventh chapter of Romans. From earliest times the commentarians have been at war—a war that has been raged almost as terribly as the war between the flesh and the spirit—as to whether Paul is speaking of regenerate or unregenerate man. It seems to me that I have only to look within myself in order to understand that chapter. Paul is simply speaking of himself, as he was by nature—just as he was before he became a Christian, and still was, every time he tried to go it alone, forgetting to reckon with the powers of God's grace within him. It is like a fearful nightmare, from which he finally awakens with a scream: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?—and sees, God be praised, that it was only a bad dream: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This word comes from the depths, as one of the old psalms has it, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Jehovah."

For there is also a fruitful repentance, a "repentance unto salvation . . . which bringeth

no regret." The day a man says: "O how I have grieved God, that day is, with all its sadness and sorrow, a good day. For then a sinner has come to the point which the prodigal son also had reached the day he went into himself (the Greek uses just such a verb of action: he "went" into himself) and said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight."

When it has reached this point in a human life, salvation is not far off—salvation—or the Savior.

And this was the third phase in the heavenly vision: an angel brought a live coal from the high altar of heaven and cleansed the prophet's lips with it; there stood a Savior whose tender, friendly gaze rested upon His strong, sorrow-stricken friend, as He said, "Fear not!"

And when God, in some way, has revealed Himself to a human being and spoken to his conscience, so that he has seen his sin and himself as hopelessly lost, then the gospel points such a one to Jesus Christ, the Crucified. For there is the heavenly high altar: it is the wind-swept hilltop outside the walls of the city where God's Son hangs on His plain wooden cross and dies, one early spring day. In His breaking heart burns that live coal of love which can cleanse your unclean lips and your unclean inheritance.

There is none who can say how far a human being must go in the acknowledgment of sin

in order to possess the assurance of salvation. This depends both on one's disposition and on past experience. Our repentance does not save us any more than our good works do. To most people it is given to experience more in their later life with the Holy One. But a new view of Jesus is, nevertheless, practically always a common experience at the great turning-point, and it is usually their sin that drives men to Him. There are also other roads leading thither, but the main highway which the greatest number trod is called "sin and grace." It was the publicans and sinners who kept close to Jesus when He walked on earth, and to Him the sinner comes to this very day. Tell me, where else in the world is there a place where the sinner may go with his sin and bury it and be able to say with assurance, "There, now it shall never again rise up against me! O, you may go to the one you injured, the one to whom you were unkind, and you may throw your arms around that person's neck and say, "You must not be angry with me any longer; I did not mean it that way. Forgive me and forget." It is there, nevertheless, and cannot thus be forgotten. But "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are **passed away;** behold, they are become new." Think what that means, the old things are passed away, graciously passed away, they no longer concern you at all, Christ tells you so, and you know it is so by the peace which He puts into

your heart—that deep sense of spiritual health, that transcendent feeling of happiness, which none know but the Christians, and which we call peace. It is just like it was in olden days when He laid His hand upon someone's head, saying, Son or daughter, be of good courage, fear not; your sins are forgiven, go in peace. I was in earnest when I baptized you, and my cross counts also for you. As Paul said when the jailer was in anguish, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

In truth, then one is saved. For surely one cannot be wrong in saying that the one who has a Savior is saved.

. . . And then: to work.

For that was the fourth stage: the prophet was sent out to declare to Israel that a remnant should be saved; the fisherman was henceforth to catch men.

Yes, that is Christianity: a heavenly vision —and then, not to be disobedient to that vision. It has always been true, and it has never been truer than it is in our day: if we are to preserve the vigor of our faith, both in all of our cultural interests and still more in the intellectual struggles which the recent researches force upon us, it must come about by our taking part, more than ever before, in service. To all alike comes the call, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." One draws up the fish out of the sea; Henceforth you are always to lift up, bring up (educate), cheer up (encourage), especially cheer up your fellow-

men—always something that has to do with "up." Your position may be never so insignificant, your talents never so small, your funds never so scanty—the call that comes to you is just as great as that to an apostle: always to help upward a little those with whom you find yourself, upward a little. The church has lost many men and women of ability, in the course of years, because they were not put to work while they were warm and vigorous.

You are such a poor one at talking to people? That makes no difference at all; people generally have heard more than enough; live for them—that is much better; pray for them —that is still better; and that is something you can do. I think it is a glorious thing to be sent out with no charge but this, always to make things a little brighter for those people I am to live with, to help them, God helping me, to see their God. We can do it. Jesus has said the same thing and more plainly, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." We become fishers of men, soul-winners, simply by following Him.

And that, to be sure, is what all true conversion should lead to: to follow Jesus.

V

I once knew a young person who was one of the most disagreeable young fellows I have ever met. He said neither "Good morning," nor "Thank you"; he was ready to scold the servants for the merest trifle; he went about

slamming doors; he did not answer when one spoke to him. In a word, he was an uncommonly unbearable fellow. He did not believe in God, and he called the Christians hypocrites. This person was converted. Seldom have I seen such a change in a human being. "Transformation" would be a better word. He became unusually likable, considerate, frank, acquired the friendliest, most delightful smile, became willing to serve, and had the most winning ways imaginable. All who saw it could not but take notice and marvel.

The truth compels me to add that this did not last so long—only about a half year or so. Then he became like the others, an excellent Christian man, who could be a bit crotchety at times, like the rest of us. The first radiance was there no longer.

Pastor Johannes Fibiger gives a strikingly beautiful and instructive account of his first happiness after his conversion, which especially revealed itself as an irresistible love toward all men*. His room-mate who lies yawning and stretching in bed, the servant-boy who brings in the tea, the smoking-jacketed crowd that can always be found shuffling about the dormitories, slippered and puffing long pipes—all are to be loved in all eternity: "They are my dear brothers," and this reaches its height one day as he is sitting in "Borch's Kollegium" reading Hegel's "Logic" with his older brother: suddenly he is

*Johannes Fibiger: "Mit Liv og Levned," pp. 106-112.

overpowered to such an extent by the thought of what an extraordinary brother he really has that he must needs get up and go over to him, put his arm around him, and kiss him on the forehead. The other lets his pipe drop from his lips as he looks up to say, "Do you really think so much of me, all of a sudden?"

I have never known Fibiger personally; but I have my doubts that this universal love toward all the souls of men remained so expansive and hearty all through life; at least his autobiography would not seem to indicate that it did.

What joy and happiness that overwhelmed the pastor in Spjellerup, when the heavenly vision had been revealed to him and the light streamed into his soul! Those famous pages end thus: "There is nothing to which I can liken the ecstasy, the inward exultation, with which I often said to myself, 'I have a God and a Savior'."* It was a genuine conversion, and he never doubted in later years that God had met him at that time and place. But the brooding melancholy that had been upon him all through his youth would still appear at times.

The time of the first love is a marvelously rich and happy time. A Christian layman of our own times, who walked most literally in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, once told me that even the colorings of nature, at the time of his conversion, were otherwise than they had been

*Mynster: "Meddelelser om mit Levned," pp. 151-154.

before, much brighter and more beautiful, and this lasted about a week. "Now they are like they were before," he added sadly.

It seems as though the first joy and splendor cannot last. This is really the case. The first love cannot be preserved in all its original freshness and warmth. Then all temptations were, so to speak, swept from one's path, one could not hear the Word often enough, could not tire of praying, could go about joyfully, singing all day long, being kind to everyone. It is beautiful to behold; I can still see before me a young divinity student who had just experienced his spiritual awakening; we were traveling together for some days through Jutland, Fünen, and Sealand: he was tireless in helping his fellow-passengers, he gave up his seat, helped them off and on the train, got their belongings down from the net, and made himself the servant of all. Alas, it vanishes like the dews of the morning.

I think it has to be so. The heavenly vision was revealed to us in an instant or at least in a short span of time, and it was then partially taken away from us; but the recollection of that time of happiness is to remain with us, and the rest of our Christian life is to be used in winning it back again, in making it our own personal, hard-won, eternal possession. The latter will be better than the former—more secure, richer, less likely to be lost.

Thus there seems to be a law in the Kingdom of God which is the direct antithesis of

evolution, i. e., that here we begin with the highest form. Otherwise everything is supposed to develop from the lowest form upward; but in God's Kingdom we have a glorious beginning, a zenith, all at once.

Abraham, father of the faithful, roams the wide and lonely expanses in his primitive vigor and simplicity, and sees the mute stars like swarms of golden bees upon the heavens —and does not think: O, what am I compared with these numberless armies of heaven, a miserable creature, an invisible point, how dare I make myself believe that God cares about my longings? But he did not think so—on the contrary he said: Behold, what a sparkling host of stars, I cannot count you, but what of that? I know that those who are to be blessed in my name shall be many more in number than you, for God has promised it. And the caravan pursues its course in the deep, heavy sand, and the old Bedouin sheik could take a handful of the fine red sand and let it glide through his fingers, and did not think: Alas, I myself am like a grain of sand in this interminable world, and soon my bones shall bleach and crumble away in the desert—how dare I believe that God's eye follows such a lonely man and that He will prepare a future that shall blossom after I am gone? But he did not think thus. He looked about him toward the east and the north and the south, nodded, and said: Ye tens of thousands and more of grains of sand, I should never be able

to finish counting you—and I know that the number of those will be yet greater who shall one day be blessed in my name, for God has promised. He did not take the difficulties into account, but only God's promises. Such was faith's beginning down here upon the earth—when has it ever reached greater heights?

And Paul, the laborer by the grace of God, hastes forth upon his course. He has laid Asia at the feet of his Lord, and the dream draws him onward into Europe. He wins Greece for Jesus and his hands are eager to stretch the lines out to Rome. He reaches Rome, and his eye strains longingly toward Spain. He arrives at Spain, and Britain looms up in his thoughts; and if he had been permitted to live longer, he would, without doubt, have made a trip to Jutland also. That is the spirit that must dwell in a missionary to the heathen, and that spirit did dwell in the first one of them all; has there since been a single one who has equalled Paul?

And then look unto the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ. For it was with Christ that Christianity began. There it was that the Ideal was planted for us all, right from the beginning: Come, follow me. I will win the world with eleven poor men; I take upon my heart the sin of the world and go with it to the cross; I heal and forgive and satisfy all whom I pass by; I transform all that I see into illustrations of the mysteries of God's

Kingdom—come, follow me. And we arise and begin to walk in His footsteps, and we have soon followed for two thousand years, but how far is not the disciple still behind his Master?

We saw God, He met us for the first time and plainly, when such and such an event took place, or when we learned to know this or that particular person, or when we heard a certain sermon preached. But alas, I lost sight of my God. So much happened, both outside me within my own life, that suggested anything but a loving and almighty God.

True. Yet I clung to Him through all the darkness, for there had been a time when I had seen Him. And finally God's smile rested upon me again. For a Christian has, as the years come and go, many experiences with God.

I saw myself, as never before, when I staggered under the burden of my sin, and I defied sin; either it should die or I. What a blessed time that was, the time of spiritual awakening, almost unearthly. But sin crouched at the door, and its desire was unto me. I should rule over it—alas, how did I rule! At times it seems to us that things grow worse and worse as the years go by. Especially the cold heart, the awful lack of love, both toward God and man—these can render us utterly lacking in courage.

Do I not speak the truth? Assuredly, but

also this is progress, to see that one makes so little progress.

And we saw Jesus that time when everything was new. We could almost touch Him. "Every time I pray," said a young merchant to me, as he stood there in his first happiness, "every time I pray, I can see Jesus just as plainly, standing before me nodding when I have said 'Amen'." But O, how many times, in later years, did we not pray, apparently to a blank wall, out into an empty universe. It was as though the cross had lost its power, the figure of Jesus faded and became so unreal.

Yes, at times. But you do, nevertheless, know your Savior better now than you did in the days of your awakening, do you not? You are no ranting enthusiast for His cause, nor does He want you to be; you have begun to observe His commandments, and that is the thing which He Himself has set as a sign of true love toward Himself (John 14:21). And many times He has since helped you in your temptations, comforted you in your sorrows, and made you happy by His nearness. Think of the many times you have since attended communion. Then do not say that you do not know Jesus better now than in the days following your conversion.

And finally the call; in those days you were all enthusiasm; each day was to be a hallowed festivity of service to Jesus. But then came reality. People were not particularly disposed to listen to us. They knew us too

well from former days. They were amused at you, perhaps. And you began to wonder whether you really had any business speaking to them about such things. You asked yourself: "Am I so very much better myself?" And you became used to looking upon unbelieving people—at last it made no impression upon you when you looked at sin and its miserable consequences.

Yes, so it often goes, but it does not need to continue so. I say to you, it is not necessary. Learn from all your disappointments, become humble through your defeats, learn wisdom from your blunders. Then begin over again and do better than before. I have noticed that in the epistles God is sometimes called "he that calleth you." The present tense is used, not the past (He that called). God keeps on calling. And He keeps on confirming the call: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." He will make you to be a blessing, even when it seems to you that you have failed miserably. Yes, you are in reality much better fitted to serve God now than you were then. You know more, and you are humbler.

And so it will be all through life. There are many who object strenuously to the expression, "daily conversion,"* and it may be that it is an awkward and confusing expression, nor is it a Biblical term. But after all, it is difficult to say exactly what conversion

*A common expression among many Danish Christians.

is; I mean that it is difficult to define the Biblical conception and to give a satisfactory explanation of the psychological condition. Scripture uses the term most frequently in speaking of the heathen, and this, to be sure, makes the case much simpler*; but Jesus uses the word also in speaking to Simon Peter on that last night: "When once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren," and people (I also) have actually taken occasion from this passage to ask the silly question, "Hadn't Peter been converted at that time?" Most people nowadays recognize the fact that conversion **may** take place very suddenly, at a certain hour by the clock, but that more often it extends over a shorter or longer period of time.

"The speaker said that everyone must be converted," said a minister's son to me after a meeting for college students. "Is that true? "Surely," I answered. "Yes, but when one has remained in the faith of his childhood and then has to be converted, it would mean that one would be converted to disbelief," the youth continued, in sober earnest. I tried to explain to him that in one's childhood faith he needed to turn away from his sin and self-love to a conscious, consecrated life in God; and he nodded understandingly.

*Generally speaking, the dogmatics of the New Testament is, to a large extent, the dogmatics of missions. Therefore it fits the simple conditions of the mission field where Christianity is new and stands face to face with the darkness of heathenism much more literally even to this very day, than it does the complex cultural life of ancient Christianity.

Yes, that which was concentrated in the conversion of Simon Peter: the strong impression of God's intervention; the awakening recognition of sin and guilt; taking refuge, in faith, in Jesus Christ and His grace; the heavenly call to the service of God and to be a blessing for others—that which appeared to the one newly awakened as in a vision, that is what we are to learn, throughout a whole life, to be obedient toward. Then it really does not make so very much difference what we call it —if only it might prosper.

CHAPTER VI

Philip and the Three Articles of the Creed: The Development of an Ordinary Man

"Nevertheless he was in earnest in his piety and in his fight for the truth."
—Gunnil Busck.

I

OF THE dozen men Jesus gathered about Him, Philip could hardly be said to have belonged to the most gifted. For that very reason he is most instructive. It is all very well when we are spoken to thus: Learn of the Apostle Peter—look at Paul—are you like John? The trouble is, there is something inside us which says each time, "Yes, but these men were so great; how can I compare myself to one of them?" But Philip was more of a plain man of the people.

Four times in the Gospels he is presented to us in the clearest light. The light falls from the figure of Jesus. How much there is to learn from this, that He, the great character, the Son of man, who looms high above all the children of men, does not erase their individuality, does not choke their peculiarities. Quite the contrary—in sheer defiance of all uniformity, He is able in the most remarkable way to draw out the peculiarity of each individual, to call forth that which is char-

acteristic in each one, and to take these personalities in hand and help them forward.

How different were not these youths who were the first to attach themselves to Him. And in each Jesus knows how to find something which He can use as a starting-point. As their talents are freely unfolding, He fosters and draws forth the best that is in each one of them. That which we see expressed in vague, indecisive lines that first day, is revealed, a few years afterward, in clear, sharp lines. John, who was irresistibly drawn to Him that morning, a seeking soul, loves Him now with the impetuosity of a true son of thunder. The taciturn James, whom Jesus found later, and from whose lips we hear no impassioned words on the occasion of the first meeting, was the first of all the disciples who went passionately though silently to his death for Jesus. Andrew, manly and helpful, whose great achievement it was to win Simon Peter, thereafter to step back into the rear ranks (where we are always in need of men), is twice seen helping his weaker fellow-disciple, and is permitted to be the fourth of the little group in that sunset scene on the Mount of Olives when Jesus initiates them into the future of the Kingdom of God (Mark 13:3). In spite of all the evil nights on the sea and in the palace courtyard, Simon proves that the surname he was given, Rock, was nevertheless the right one, and lays the foundation of the church on Pentecost. Nathanael sees

"greater things than these," and on a certain early morning he is one of the little crew that rows to meet the risen Savior. The publican, Levi, writes no more reports and accounts, but gives us, like the gift of God that he is, a Gospel according to Matthew.

To all these higher levels Jesus lifts them, because He has seen their feeble beginnings. As when an artist, having blockd in his subject, slowly but surely strengthens his lines until the sketch has become a finished picture, so we see one apostle-figure after another stepping forth from the dim background into the full, clear light of day.

That is what we are now to see in the case of Philip—in order that we ourselves may learn something therefrom.

II

As far as we can tell, Philip was the fourth one in the group of youths who attached themselves to Jesus. The Scripture says that He, Jesus, "findeth Philip: and . . . saith unto him, Follow me." Nothing is said as to Philip's answer; perhaps he said nothing at all, but he followed Him. There was nothing to hesitate about here.

That Jesus **found** Philip would indicate that He has been seeking for him. He must have known that Philip had in him the making of an apostle. And it is easy to see whence He knew this, for the evangelist says plainly that "Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city

of Andrew and Peter." Doubtless the two brothers have recommended him. "He will fit in with us," they have thought. They had grown up together in the little colony of fisherfolk, and they have known that he was a serious-minded young man who knew his law and his prophets. It was because of this that Philip so quickly felt himself attracted by Jesus. We can see this from the fact that as soon as he had begun to rejoice in Jesus and had hurriedly "found" his friend Nathanael, in order to make him a partaker of the same happiness he had found, he says to him, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Then he experiences his first disappointment upon the new way. Nathanael assumes a doubting attitude toward this discovery. "'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' he asks. Philip had not expected that. He had come, filled with happiness, to share his joy with his friend, and is not at all prepared to argue with him. And the fine thing about it is that he did not try to argue. Another might have been tempted to bring forth proof with many words. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' What in the world makes you think of such a thing? Are you so narrow-minded as to think that a great spirit could not come from a little town? May I ask how large a town must be in order to produce great spirits? Or perhaps you mean that no proph-

ets are to come from Galilee. That is what the Pharisees say, too, but that is because they do not know their Bible History, for Jonah was from Gath-hepher, and that is surely in Galilee, etc. . . ."

That is what you and I would probably have done, in our zeal and cleverness, and for every proof we presented, the other would doubtless have had another ready that proved the exact contrary; and one from one leaves zero. It was Philip's good fortune not to be nearly so clever, and that was fortunate for Nathanael also. He was doubtless surprised at his friend's suspicions, and a little disappointed—but then he said in his hearty way, "Come and see." It was simply irresistible. It was so frank and straightforward, so simple and so persuasive, and right to the point. "Come and see." Of course it was no answer to the objection, not at all, but it is this inexpressibly natural and therefore unassailable invitation to "Come and see" that leaves nothing else to do but to come and see; one is disarmed.

It is Philip's entrance into Christianity and his first attempt at rendering service as an apostle.

Still, it does make a difference what city one comes from. Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. I once heard of a woman who explained enthusiastically, "O, I love **Svaertegade!**" It may seem to us that that is a remarkable object for the verb "love."

But that is doubtless because we do not hail from **Svaertegade** and therefore do not really know **Svaertegade*** at all. She was born there and treasured her most precious memories from that street. The city from whence you came, or the street, or the country—be assured that it has its own great significance. It is this that is elemental in love of country. What is it except an expansion of the joy we have in our homes? Doubtless it may be tremendously entertaining at the Petersens, and most terribly cozy at the Jensens—the only trouble is that it is not home. Certainly things are done on a larger scale in America, and there is greater efficiency in Germany—but, it is not home. And there is more to be considered than the earth I walk on—there is the spirit I breathe. The Norwegians have greater love for missions, and there are more out-and-out Christian characters in England; and yet everything would indicate that the Danish Church is the place in which I have the best prospects of becoming that which God has intended me to be.

And it does make a difference whom one has associated with in his youth. There in Bethsaida the best of the young men had found one another. Those two excellent young brothers knew Philip well, and he knew Nathanael. It needed only that One should come and become the center in that circle, and they

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*_Svaerte_ is the Danish word for "shoe-blacking". _Gade_ is "street".

would all become world-renowned figures. That character-developing and goal-setting value which the Christian Youth Movement has already had for many of the youths of our time can scarcely be overestimated. The personal talks between man and man, the power of Christian friendship—these have ever been the best way of winning souls for Christ.

And finally the intellectual circle in which one has grown to manhood has a tremendously important influence. Philip was acquainted with the law and the prophets from his youth up. He whose picture they had all dimly sought to paint, had but to come in the flesh and Philip would not hesitate to follow Him. All of which tells us that the value of genuinely spiritual religious education in our schools cannot be valued too highly; and still I would not deny myself the pleasure of being the first to tell my children the glorious stories of Abraham and Jesus, and of watching their attentive faces.

What, by the way, did Philip really know about Jesus? What did he know about the nature of Christianity? What did he know about the way that lay before him?

O, so little, so very little. But he did know one thing. He knew that something new had commenced in his life. He knew that he belonged no longer in Bethsaida—from now on he would go where He went. There was no such thing as going back.

He had learned to renounce.

III

It was the time of the Passover.

The Jews, only a short while before, had sought to put Jesus to death in Jerusalem, so it was not to be thought of to go up there. I am afraid we can hardly picture to ourselves what it meant for an Israelite not to be able to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. It is like the case of a boy who is away at boarding-school, and has been rejoicing all through the autumn months at the thought of coming home for Christmas—only to get word that he is not to come, as his mother is sick. Jesus formed a plan. He would celebrate the Passover far out in the quietude of the desert and provide food for such as wanted to accompany Him.

All the guests were self-invited. Like white birds the many white sail-boats slipped across the blue lake; like living, many-colored flowers the multitudes made their way along the shore when it was rumored that the prophet from Galilee was in those parts. Jesus and His disciples, coming down from the ridge of hills one morning, see this throng in the valley.

Then it is that Jesus asks Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?"

It is one of those moments when we may surely imagine that a smile played about the lips of Jesus as He asks.

For we read, as in a parenthesis (and as has been said, one should pay close attention to parentheses, for often they give us the most

illuminating glimpse of a person or incident) that Jesus said this "to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do."

But why was it that He particularly wished to prove Philip? Surely not because He just happened to be walking at Philip's side and laid His hand upon his shoulder. No, Jesus has undoubtedly chosen to walk at Philip's side in order to read him a little lecture.

"Yes," says Philip, "not even two hundred shillings worth of bread would be enough for all these people."

That was probably the sum total of the contents of the little box that held their common fund. Philip, then, has no counsel to give.

Andrew has been walking close by and has been listening to the conversation. We remember he was Philip's good friend and townsman. "There is a lad here," says Andrew, "who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?" He, too, has no counsel to give, but it is something of a help to Philip that there is one more who does not know what to do. And yet Andrew did make a little contribution toward the solution of their problem. He pointed to a little boy, and it pleased the Savior to allow His marvelous miracle to pass through the hand of a child.

What, then, was Jesus' purpose with regard to Philip?

He wanted to **awaken** him—awaken his attention, because of that which was about to

take place. Philip was not to drowse while the table was miraculously spread. They were all so accustomed to having everything come, as if of its own accord, when their Master was with them, that they were liable not to consider where it all came from, and a nature like Philip's, somewhat simpler and slower-witted than others', was especially open to that danger. "Wake up, Philip—just imagine that you were the one who had to provide food for four or five thousand men, besides women and children (truly a very meaningful "besides")—how would you go about it? There are no restaurants hereabouts, and not nearly enough money if there were, nor are there any generous friends in the neighborhood who will send sheep and raisins and figs as Abigail did in David's time—what then shall we do?"

He had run aground—and that was just what Jesus wanted. Just such a condition is always necessary as a background for His works; indeed He cannot act before things have come to such a pass. Just as a drowning man cannot be saved before he has lost his strength and has ceased to struggle (for not until then can the rescuer take hold of him), so, as a rule, must a human being arrive at exactly zero, perceive his own nothingness, before God can save him. He cannot, so to speak, gain a hold until then. And it is our nature to look for every possible way out, to speculate upon all conceivable ways and

means, to reckon, and hope, and worry, and dare—before we declare ourselves bankrupt and lay the whole case in the hands of the Almighty. As long as we are able, the Almighty is unable. And yet there are many who afterward gave to chance or their own good brains the credit, when it was God who helped them past the deadline.

But in the hearts of simple Christians remain beautiful memories of times in their lives when their heavenly Father marvelously helped them in their direst need.

For instance, I have heard of an elderly woman who lived not so very far from Copenhagen; she had been very sick and the doctor had told her she must eat an egg each day until she regained her strength. That was all very well, but eggs were dear and she was poor, and had neither money with which to buy nor yet a hen to lay eggs for her. Nevertheless, the Savior has not only taught us to pray for daily bread; at times we have also a right to pray for an egg (Luke 11:12). And that is literally what she did. What happens? Yes, reader, you will have to excuse the fact that my story verges on the comical; but if that be the case, life itself is comical now and then, for the story is true. The old lady is still alive and can tell you that when she had gotten up and was dressing, she heard an odd sound, like the cackling of a hen. When she comes over to investigate, a hen flies out through her window and down into the garden

—and yonder in her bed lies a fresh-laid egg. She took it, in all simplicity, with thanks to God, and ate it. The incident was repeated several days in succession; then suddenly she had qualms of conscience: "Have I a right to take the eggs which a strange hen lays in my bed?" She went to the owner, her neighbor, and made her confession. The man was naturally amused at the incident, and said, "As long as my hen lays her eggs in your bed, it is plain that they are intended for you." And later, when the hen no longer paid her these daily visits, the owner sent the egg.

I know the name of another old woman whose secret need had become so great that she had decided to apply for admission to the poorhouse. But that would be a hard thing for her, and she prayed earnestly that God would send help. And when she opened her door, there was a whole row of gold ten-crown* pieces along the threshold. Literally. To this day she cannot even guess who could have had a presentiment of her need and laid them there; but God had suggested it to the thought of someone or other.

You see, these people had gotten so far that they could do nothing, and they knew it; then they could thank, as Jesus did, for the blessing the Father in Heaven would lay upon the barley loaves in the little child's hand. Once I happened to say, in a sermon, "And if your wallet is empty, and the bread-hamper and

*A Danish crown *(Krone)*, normally, is valued at $0.268.

pantry likewise, and if you can thank God and say grace with the empty hamper before you, I promise you that before evening there shall be something in it." When we left the church the old **Provst** said, "I was very glad for your sermon, but I am afraid you cannot stand by what you said about the bread-hamper, for there are Christians who have died of hunger —but God did not forsake them." It is true, and it is beautiful; still, this is the rule: God hears us when we pray, but "necessity is the mother of invention." This is a truth which the church of our day needs to hear; faith in God's providence is on the decline among us. It is not to be expected that worldly people shall believe that God helps in temporal need; for that matter it was only toward those multitudes that had gone out into the desert to hear the Lord that He felt the duty of providing food. But it is to be expected that Christians should know more of that part of our faith than they apparently do—and that they would do more to impart that same faith to others.

And this was the teaching that Philip was not to miss: The little can become much, if only we are able to thank the Father in Heaven.

In short, that day he learned, in real earnest, the first article of the Creed.

IV

Again the Passover was at hand; but days and years had passed since the one of which we have just spoken.

This time Jesus was in Jerusalem; but this time it was His will to die. His disciples were with Him, and among them also Philip.

Then, one day, quite suddenly, some men with handsome, clear cut features and fair complexions, came over to Philip and asked a certain thing of him. And the prayer they brought is the best that man can pray. It is the prayer that tells us most concerning the one who prays it. For if a person prays that prayer, he is well on the way. They came and said to him, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Why do you think they came to Philip? Was his, perhaps, a good and friendly face, so that they dared to make their request of him? I should not be surprised; still, since those words "who was of Bethsaida of Galilee" are repeated here, and since Philip's is a Greek name, it is perhaps more probable that they have been acquainted in that town, where many Greeks lived, and that they have seen Philip there.

But what does Philip say? Plainly he has no idea of what he shall do in this unexpected situation. For Greeks were Gentiles, and Gentiles could hardly be given audience with the Messiah of Israel. But on the other hand, it was after all such a good prayer— — —.

What then does Philip do? "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus" (John 12:22). Again Philip goes to his friend and townsman, Andrew, as he did out in the desert. Clearly he has always retained an especial confidence in him. And also this is a beautiful trait in his character; there are so many who hide their embarrassment and cover their ignorance with an appearance of importance and an assumed air of mystery: "Hm, I'll think the matter over a bit; perhaps I can bring my influence to bear. I can't promise anything very definite, but you can come back in a day or two, etc." No, there was nothing of that sort; Philip goes to Andrew: "There are some Greeks, and so forth and so on—what are we to do?" And then the two together go to Jesus. It is often a help for two to go together to Him, when one is at his wits' end.

But what, then, did Jesus answer?

Indeed, that is the most remarkable of all.

He answered, and He did not answer.

They saw that He was greatly stirred. There is a thing that I have noticed several times in the Gospel—that when Jesus heard someone speak of the great world, or when He Himself mentioned it, He almost always referred, in the same breath, to His own death.

And here it is that He begins to speak, in such a strangely mysterious way, yet so beautifully and so grippingly, of the grain of wheat which abides by itself alone, if it does not die

—and Jesus was not afraid to die, but at times it is as though He is apprehensive lest He abide alone; but if it falls into the black earth and vanishes from sight, it will bear much fruit. Through death to life, that is the singular but fundamental law in the Kingdom of God which He sets before Himself and all His disciples. They, too, are to hate their own life in this world, and they are to follow Him along His strange, dark path. Then it is as though a slight tremor passes through His soul, as when a gust of wind strikes the clear face of the forest-lake and ripples it for a few moments; but quickly He is again in a state of deep rest and knows that it shall all serve to glorify the Father's name. And He speaks further—of the roll of the thunder of judgment that is heard over the evil prince of this world; but Jesus, when He is lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** men unto Himself.

So spoke Jesus.

And Philip and Andrew and the others listened, and wondered, Philip perhaps most of all. "For," thought he, "is this an answer to our question, as to whether these Greeks might see the Master?" And we, too, wonder and ask, "Did they see Him?"

But later they understood. These Greeks were a little group of emissaries who stood out there and knocked at the door. "Open the door, we want to come in; we long so to see Jesus." The evil one still held them in his dark prison. "Now I am soon coming to you,"

—that is Jesus' answer—"and I will draw you all, every one, unto myself, also you Greeks, when once I have been lifted up. I will send Philip and Andrew and the others in my place, with a greeting from heaven. But the way leads up to the cross of Golgotha, and Gethsemane lies between. Thither must I go, though my soul trembles thereat, and you must go with me if you are to go on a crusade to Greece later."

Golgotha, Golgotha! Dreadful place, yet blessed by millions. Where the red rose of His blood bloomed, there do we first learn what Christianity is. Even though we have learned, as children, to believe in a Father in Heaven, yet we must learn, as men, to believe in the Savior of sinners; until we do, we shall not know what the heart and, as it were, the nerve of Christianity is. Strange, that one may have gone about for so long as an undeveloped Christian; and then there must come certain ones from without, with some remarkable question or other which they address to us; perhaps we have to see other souls thirsting to see Jesus; then, as we are trying to help them, our own need is revealed to us. Going on an errand for them in a childlike way, we ourselves became grown Christians as we went—we learned to see the depth of sin in ourselves and found the way to the cross, where God's Son loved us and gave Himself up for us.

Something of this sort was dawning on

Philip. In other words, he learned to spell his way through the second article of the Creed.

V

Now the hour is at hand.

The Supper is over, they are sitting in a circle around the Master, and He is telling them the most precious truths. Occasionally one of the listeners asks a question as their hearts gain courage to reveal themselves to Him, and even Judas (he of the inconspicuous characteristic: "not Iscariot")—even Judas gathers courage to raise a problem that testifies to deep thought and strong feeling for his fellowmen: "Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" And Jesus, in the friendliest way, takes up the various questions and explains to them, tenderly and in detail, the things they want to know. These chapters of John's Gospel have their own peculiar atmosphere; it hovers over them, and is on the one hand mild and heavenly, and yet melancholy and breathing anxiety. They sense the fact that He is bidding them farewell, but they do not really understand why He is to leave them, and they cannot reconcile themselves to the thought. And He speaks of the way they are to take; He Himself i sthe Way; "no one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Then Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Good Philip. There is again something he cannot understand. It seems to him that it should be possible to make it simpler. And so he has been sitting thinking that if only they might see God, everything would be all right. Perhaps some of the others have had similar thoughts. But he, open-hearted, honest soul that he was, says it bluntly, just as he had thought of it.

He did not know how he would be grieving his Master thereby. If there was anything Philip did not want to do, it was surely this —to grieve his Master. So it has surely both shamed and distressed him when Jesus turns to him and says in a peculiar tone, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John 14:9-10.)

This is a rebuke. He ought to have known this. But notice that Jesus calls him by name as we do when someone we think a great deal of is a bit slow in understanding a certain thing and we desire to explain it to them. And He gives full particulars. He explains so carefully and in such a childlike way the relationship that exists between Himself and the Father and how it will be in the future between them, His disciples, and Him and His Father.

But there is only One who can make this relationship clear, because He Himself main-

tains and quickens that relationship, and that is God the Holy Spirit. He was in Jesus in a way that could not be measured, and He worked upon the disciples when Jesus spoke to them, for His words were spirit and life. But He was to work in them when the leave-taking was complete. And from this point Jesus speaks plain and comforting words concerning the Spirit of truth who is to come and make all things clear to them, and remind them of everything, and testify with them, and glorify Jesus, and a great deal more.

This is the deepest thing in Christianity. Renunciation is the condition; faith in God the Father is the first and may be understood even by children; faith in God's Son is the central thing and the key, the Gospel of the Gospel; but faith in God the Holy Spirit is the deepest and inmost. That is why it is often also the last to which we attain. We know this from what the ministers say to us on Pentecost: "All the world celebrates Christmas, the Christians celebrate Easter, but who understands and prizes Pentecost?" Thus they reproach us, forgetting that one of the reasons for this condition is doubtless this, that the ministers themselves, in the course of the Church Year, have forgotten the Holy Spirit, until with each oncoming Whitsuntide they are reminded that it is He whom we are to thank for it all.

Truly, who understands and prizes Whitsuntide? He does, who truly desires to **live**

Christ. On Calvary the door of grace was opened; but that is only the beginning. Now we are to **live,** and live each day. Alas, it comes to grief so often. Our thoughts resist; the realities of life appall us; our own flesh is our worst enemy. Then our reason says, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Away with the old dogmas, and cast overboard the thought of the deep depravity of the human heart. So say the new philosophers, and some of the pious ancients are acquainted with the thought and chime in: "Yes, is not this what we have said? Our old faith in God the Father, our real Lord—after all, that is enough; what have we to do with this new-fangled talk of Jesus and the blood?" But then Jesus will say, "So you do not know me. And yet I have been in Christianity so long! No, it is the divine power you lack. That is the mystery you still need to grasp. It is supernatural revelation alone that saves. The Holy Spirit must rule and live in your hearts ere you gain the victory over sin; until He comes into your hearts you will not receive assurance as to your hope nor rest in your prayer."

It was this that Philip and the others studied for the first time on that Maundy Thursday evening. He was learning something of the third article of the Creed.

VI

Do you see the development? Do you see how the personality of an honest man is plainly revealed; how these few characteristics, loosely sketched though they are, are sufficient to set the peculiarity of one soul in the clearest light?

So Jesus is always. As a magnet He draws forth that which dwells deepest in the personality; not to cow it, but to clarify it and ripen it. He takes us by the hand and leads us forward, step by step, as He led Philip. For while it is true that we are different from Him, each being peculiar to himself, yet the way is the same, for He is the same.

And this is the way: we must break with the world, and happy that group of youths that early learned renunciation; we must completely and like children rely upon God our Father, and glorious is that freedom from care which such youths achieve; but there must come a time when we strike bottom, so to speak, in ourselves—then we learn to love Jesus, God's Son, as the Savior of sinners, and only then do life and work really begin; but then the Holy Spirit must become the motive power in our life. Happy those youths who thus dedicate themselves; there will be vigor and action in their long, beautiful working-day.

CHAPTER VII

When Thomas Interrupted Christ: Concerning the Difficulties of Faith in Later Youth

Doubt doth weigh so sorely.—Grundtvig: Cornelius.

I

IF THE time should come when one of us becomes utterly miserable, and we sit brooding and thinking that things can never be righted again, no better counsel could be given us than to open our New Testament at the fourteenth chapter of John and read there:

"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me" (both God and Christ, just as though we were to hold one fast by each of our hands). "In my Father's house are many mansions" (we see the many-towered castle etched against the evening heavens, and the castle stairway down which He comes to receive the weary home-comer, and all the many guest-chambers). "If it were not so, I would have told you" (to be sure; hence there cannot be the slightest doubt that it is so). "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (after all, the part about the castle

was but a picture for the imagination; but this is the real content of the Christian hope itself, the two joys of Heaven: "where I am"; at last, then, we shall see Him face to face—Him whom we loved and in whom we had believed, though we had never seen Him; "where I am, there ye may be also"; ye—that is, we shall all meet around Him, we who belonged together and were His). "And whither I go, ye know the way."

— —He got no farther. For right at this point Thomas interrupted Him.

O Thomas, how could you do it! If you had kept still and permitted Him to talk, we should perhaps have been told of still more glorious things—have been given still deeper insight into heaven and into the heart of Jesus; but instead there is this dull, abrupt interruption:

"Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?"

There is much food for thought in this contradiction and interruption, coming as it does right in the midst of that strange time of tense feeling, with its shades of melancholy, sorrow at parting, trembling hearts, and celestial sunbeams.

Was he simply indisposed for the moment? Was he tired, so that he had not really been paying attention to Jesus' words? Or does not this abrupt interruption rather point to a **development,** to a soul that has come to a certain stage of its development?

II

— —A long time elapses before we hear Thomas say anything. It is not before we come to the eleventh chapter of John. Up to that time he is silent. Doubtless he has said a great deal; but as little as possible, and nothing worth recording.

This taciturnity may suggest one of two possibilities. It may indicate a person who goes about listening and pondering what he hears. Or it may indicate one who has unwillingly accepted a situation, but who has been harboring something for a good while. In the case of Thomas it evidently points to both. Otherwise why should the writers of the Gospels be at such pains to call our attention to the fact that his name meant "Didymus" or "twin"? It has hardly been done simply for the purpose of making a casual etymological observation, but rather because it was characteristic of Thomas: there was a twin-nature, a duality in his make-up.

And when he finally did speak, it is certainly a most characteristic utterance that falls from his lips.

—A message had come saying that their friend Lazarus was lying at the point of death, and Jesus desired to go up to Bethany to awaken him. A rather strange conversation ensues. The Jews had lately sought to stone Him when He was last in Jerusalem, and Jesus steadfastly affirms, at first in enigmatic

picture-language, later in a plain statement, that He intends to go.

And finally the word that saves the situation comes from Thomas:

"Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Most people see in these words only an expression of devotion and courage. And so they are. But is there not more in them than that? It was Thomas (which means "twin") who used them. Was there not also this spirit back of the words: "It is senseless! Absolutely senseless. It is sure death. That will finish everything. All that we have fought for, all that we have hoped for—at an end. But if He insists, there is nothing else to do. He must know how it will end. It is insanity; but we belong together; and if He wants to die, we will die with Him. Forward, comrades, into the jaws of death."

It is Thomas' reasoning that runs afoul of the cross. But his noble, loyal soul is not false to his Master.

* * *

—And now it was the night of parting. None of them really understood what lay ahead of them. But it was as though a spirit of inexplicable heaviness hung over them—but over their Master there was a peculiar transfiguration. Had He talked about the grave and about death and judgment, Thomas would doubtless have kept still, perhaps concealing a bitter smile. But He was telling

them not to be afraid, and about the Father-house with its many mansions, and about meeting Him again, and of Heaven, and the way leading thither, and Thomas suddenly lost all patience with Him. He seemed to lie under the necessity of causing disturbance and discord in the midst of all that talk about peace to peaceless hearts.

His emotions were in turmoil; flames of rebellion burned within him. "Be assured, we have not the slightest idea where you are going, and how in the world should we know where the way lies?"

* * *

The next time the disciples were gathered, Thomas was not with them. The silent man had now become a lonely man. What was there in their company for him—that was doubtless what he thought. "He is no longer with them." It was something entirely different when He was alive. But to have a meeting without Him—what good would that do? One of us is no better than the other. No, I am not going."

That, however, was his loss. For when the door was shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you."

How the disciples hurried to find Thomas —and I think Peter was especially busy, for their names are given together in the very next chapter (John 21:2). That may indicate that those two disciples have been together

a great deal during those days. "Yes, Thomas, I know"; Peter has said, "but when I tell you now that there was a special greeting to me from the angel, and I saw Jesus with my own eyes and stood right up close to Him, and we all saw Him at the same time and heard Him speak, don't you believe it?"

Then Thomas answers, and his voice is cutting, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

This is cynical. To think that he can get himself to speak so of his Master's poor, maltreated body.

It is his will which has become defiant. "I will not believe." He is on the boundary line between callousness and overwhelming despair.

But he has a gracious Lord. And the rest of the disciples succeeded at least so far in their attempt at persuasion that he was with them the next time they were assembled. Jesus came and stood in their midst, saying, "Peace be unto you." Then He addresses Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

But Thomas did none of these things. He did not need, now, to touch his Master's body. The Master had touched him—had touched the tender spot in his soul. He had lost his

faith in his Master, and the Master had mentioned just that thing. O, to have to be thus reminded of one's own hard words. "Be not faithless"—He was addressing the will: It is in your own power, Thomas, and has always been so.

What was there to do but to cast himself down at the Master's feet, and cover his own face, and say, "My Lord and my God."

III

—Twice afterward his name is mentioned.

The first of these is when they are out on the sea, engaged in their old occupation of fishing, and they see Jesus on the shore. There is a peculiar clarity in the whole account, a clearness of atmosphere as that of the early morning itself. Thomas is one of the company, one of Simon Peter's crew.

The second time his name is mentioned is on the occasion of the prayer meeting in the upper room in Jerusalem. One hundred and twenty men and women have gathered there in continuous prayer, all being of one mind, for the coming of the Spirit. Thomas is with them also in this place.

He has found his place in the old work and in the communion of the saints.

IV

In his absorbing account of the youth, Hugh Beaver, Robert Speer tells of a child who had the peculiarity of never wanting to use God's

name. The parents were at times much exercised concerning this, and began to wonder whether some strange doubt had taken possession of the child's soul. The boy died at an early age; and among his possessions was found a scrap of paper on which he had written in the large round script of childhood these words: "God is love; He loves little lambs." That which the child, in shy veneration, had not been able to get himself to say, he had confided to the paper. It was his confession of faith, his creed.

In early youth we do not speak much of these things, and that is natural. But when the youth has reached his teens and never a word passes his lips, no question, no expression of joy over something he has heard, over a book, over a person, there is some reason for anxiety lest he is silent because he has nothing to say. And yet this is not always conclusive. There is something in the youth that is striving for expression, but his environment opposes it, and he himself likewise, so that his lips remain closed. Perhaps he keeps a diary; in such a diary one sixteen-year-old lad wrote: "I do not want to, and yet I do so much want to belong to Jesus."

To these young persons Christianity is a cross which throws a shadow. It will rob them of their joys and forbid them to do a great many things. It will hamper their freedom. It brings gloom and makes one uncomfortable.

Meanwhile there are many peculiar developments in the youth himself. He falls in love and suffers disappointments there, he makes warm friendships only to burn his fingers—again he suffers disappointment. He sets a goal for himself in this temporal world, throws himself heart and soul into his work; but he over-estimates his own value, runs up against the stern reality of life and comes off second best. And perhaps on top of all this, a great sorrow comes to him—a death within his own circle. That this should happen right now, just when things were beginning to come right, just when we have begun to care for each other in an entirely different way than before—O that then everything should come to a brutal end.

Nor is it simply the things without—his environment—that show him his impotence; even this trivial thing, to practice self-control proves a failure. He desires to break a certain habit or lay aside some fault; he fights against it and for a time he succeeds; then he again suffers defeat. And that is, of all things, the most wretched, not even to be master in one's own house. Nothing produces despondency to the extent that impotence does. That is what causes that expression of melancholy seen on so many youthful faces. "Never could I have believed," wrote a young student, "that it was so hard to be young." Ah, yes, that is just what it can be.

In his distress he turns, perhaps, to the

Bible, thinking to find comfort and light there. And what does he find? Contradiction upon contradiction! The story of creation is at variance with modern science, according to his studies. In the fourth chapter Cain kills his brother—and then if he doesn't go and take to himself—a wife! Where in the wide world did **she** come from? Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel—that was the whole family, and then Cain takes a wife! And then we have the atonement, God slaying His own innocent Son—someone must suffer, it matters not who; not to mention the doctrine of eternal hell which runs contrary to the thought of a loving God—we would not treat our worst enemy thus, and so on.

"Suppose I had been born in Turkey," an older boy once asked me; "would I not have become a Mohammedan?"

"In all probability," I answered.

"Well, then, how can a person know that Christianity is the true religion and not Mohammedanism, for instance?"

"Well," said I, "if you have more confidence in Mohammed than in Christ, I think you should become a Mohammedan."

"No, thanks," said he, and was soon ready with another difficulty.

The intellect of youth runs headlong against the cross in the general scheme of things and in Christianity. He does not necessarily lose all; perhaps he himself fears to die and is very anxious to be saved; often he has been glad

to say his evening prayers; but it is all meaningless. He swallows it all and says nothing.

* * *

But from this point it is not far to the second stage, where also the feelings rebel against Christianity.

Now the youth wants to show that all of this is, to him, so tremendously a matter of indifference. Just as we, when we were children, were sometimes seized with a nervous, almost irresistible desire to hurl the carafe to the floor, when we had been cautioned to carry it carefully—just as dizzy people may have a violent desire to throw themselves over the railing on top of the Round Tower—so these young people are seized with a desire to turn all these things topsy turvy and make sport of religion. Questions that are entirely uncalled for swarm forth. The play of their features tells its own story. And now it is no longer the cross, an eternal hell, God's omniscience, and all of the somber things of Christianity that call forth their opposition. No, it is all that talk of "grace" and "peace" and "eternal salvation" and "Jesus"—in a word, now it is the mild tones in Christianity which irritate and goad them on. If they are obliged to attend family devotions, they drop the hymn book on the floor with a thud; they slam the door behind them as they leave. They are entirely out of harmony with Christianity.

And yet—how many of them are there not

who long to know where He went, and the way thither! Their parents are anxious and troubled, and there is reason enough for their anxiety; would that they knew how the young soul really longs for peace and a clear understanding of his relationship to God. One of them wrote in his journal, "O Jesus, in spite of everything, in spite of my coldness and so-called doubts and all my over-estimation of self, I have always earnestly longed for you, and deep down in my soul your image has stood, indelibly painted."

* * *

—There are sufficient grounds for anxiety; for all of this may so easily lead to the third stage, when not only the intellect shakes its head in doubt, and the feelings revolt, but the will itself says, "No," and becomes stubborn.

He withdraws into his own shell. I prefer to attend to my own affairs. I have had enough of meetings. Well-meaning friends from this or that Christian organization try to get hold of him; they testify to him and, apparently, make a bad matter worse.

Thomas said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." I once heard a young student go even farther. Said he, "Even though Jesus revealed Himself to me, I would not believe in Him." To be sure there is no danger that He will—why in the world

should He reveal Himself to one who did not care to have Him do so? And furthermore, the student was to a certain extent right: even a vision would not give him faith, for it would speedily be explained away. Nevertheless, all of this shows how far a stubborn will can go. And when undisguised denial is once put into words, the moral bond is also easily loosed. Why not follow after one's desires? Why not enjoy life? Who can really hinder me? Religion? I don't believe in that any more. Morality? Stuff and nonsense! Moral values fluctuate. And soon one is on the downward path, traveling with ever-increasing speed. One is headed for despair and, finally, perdition.

V

There is only one way out.

Often it may seem as though there are as many ways as there are souls. Some found Him because they sought an ideal and longed for the eternal; they are probably the fewest. The Swedish philosopher, Pontus Wikner, was one of these. Others stretched out their hands after Him when they felt the need of a resurrection-hope, either because they had lost one they loved, or because they, themselves, had to face death. So it was with the Danish philosopher, Heegaard. Again, there were those who became disgusted with sin, who were accused by their own consciences, who feared the day of reckoning, and found peace

at the cross. But in reality there is only one way, the one He Himself pointed out that selfsame evening when Thomas asked concerning it: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

He, Himself, is the way: His person. Christianity is Christ—Christ dead for all men, but arisen and alive.

And when the intellect of youth loses the path and runs up against so many incomprehensible things in the world about him, and in the Bible, and in his own soul—is there any other solution of all this want of harmony than Jesus Christ Himself? For it is He alone that can make all things good again, for He has all authority in heaven and on earth—He is the Bible's sufficiency and its all! All of the rest you may safely let lie, the miracles and the other riddles; His power must be made perfect in the soul's weakness.

And when the feelings are repelled by Christianity and would rather give it all up in order to be genuine and true—or so it may seem —then one's love of truth must stand this test: What do you, yourself, say concerning Jesus Christ? Is there aught that is more worthy of your longings than He? Would you not be as He?

And when finally the will becomes stubborn, let the youth know that now he has come to the ultimate, where the great choice is to be made and where the last battle is to be won or lost. For in the last analysis, Christianity is a matter of the will—not an intellectual ex-

periment, not one of several philosophical truths, nor a vague, overwhelming emotion, a beautiful dream or fantasy—but something that must be decided by the whole personality, and that something is this: will you, in full confidence, give yourself to Jesus Christ Himself?

When once this is settled, a man will find his proper place. Then he goes once more to his wonted task; but now that task lies, as it were, bathed in the light of morning and has come to have an eternal value. And now he feels the need of being among fellow-Christians, and he prays, as they do, that the Holy Spirit may come upon him and make him fitted for the greatest service of all here upon earth.

CHAPTER VIII

Judas and Peter: The Law of Fall in a Human Life

May God in His mercy close unto us that chasm for all eternity.—V. Birkedal.

I

THAT which happened to Peter and Judas on that eventful Thursday night makes it possible for us to examine what we may call the law of fall in a human life.

I have the illustration or concept, "law of fall," directly from one who had a bitter experience. He had come to my study and was telling of his melancholy lot. Now, at this late date, he was able to see with startling clearness how it had all taken place with the logical inevitability of a natural law—exactly as when one throws a stone out over a field (this was his expression) and it curves toward the earth, nearer and nearer, until it strikes. "Now I see it all in just that way; I felt how it was getting more and more of a hold upon me; I lingered over that which I had previously shunned; I found it quite interesting to see and listen to that in others which had previously troubled me. I hung cards bearing Bible passages on my wall that I might concentrate upon them, but by this time the other pictures had been nailed upon the walls of

my fantasy—I felt, half unconsciously, that I was nearing my fall, and yet I could not withstand—and now I am a fallen man."

Such, in effect, was his story.

The thought of such a law of fall in the human soul is a dreadful and serious one. And for that reason it is so essential that we study this law, in order that we may be on guard against its destructive workings.

II

When we attempt a study of the character of Judas, the Scripture is by no means lacking in material. Time and again a strong light is thrown upon his person which gives us the clearest insight into the inner development of that disciple who was to receive the dismal surname, "who also betrayed him." Georg Brandes must have read the Gospels very hurriedly and with strong prejudices, or his usual sense for the psychological must for once have faied him, else he could not have called the character of Judas improbable, psychologically untrue.

It began with an aversion to Jesus.

He who had unquestionably been an enthusiastic disciple with great practical possibilities came to a point in his spiritual life which we might call the dead center. He began to experience disappointment; perhaps he had anticipated having a part in a golden age of illustrious achievement, but it turned out to be nothing but journeys afoot and missionary

sermons. He grew thoroughly tired of preaching, and praying, and spiritual conversation, and he became, little by little, an outsider. But he swallowed his feeling of disgust and kept his own counsel, instead of unburdening his heart to the Master. Then a decided break occurred in Galilee when, following the words of the Lord in the synagogue at Capernaum concerning His body as the bread of life (John 6), the majority of His disciples drew back. They went without saying goodbye, just like so many young people who have quietly left the church and their Christian friends without telling why; Judas remained, but something had collapsed in his soul; indeed the very sight of Jesus made him angry, from that day on; it was this that Jesus had seen when He said, "one of you is a devil" (John 6:70).

—And this led to the second stage in the law of fall: he accomodated himself to a sin.

He no longer fought against a tendency; he consciously housed a sin. We know that this sin was thievery. Judas was the treasurer for the little company, and it is quite reasonable to suppose that the sums that went into the treasury were not always so small, since prominent women were joining the group and looking after its support. The proposal of Zacchaeus—to give half of his goods to the poor—is hardly likely to have been the only one of its kind; in the days of the apostolic church men often sold all they owned and

gave the proceeds to the poor. The story of the unrighteous steward shows that swindling was well-known also in those days. Is it unreasonable to suppose that Judas, feeling that sooner or later he would break with his friends, was already putting sums aside or seeking to speculate with the common fund? However that may be, this much is clear; the protecting power which lay in following Jesus was taken away from Judas from the time when he inwardly severed his connection with the holy influence of Jesus. His strong point, the understanding of money-affairs, now became a deadly danger. For there is deadly danger to a human soul in compromising with a sin.

If a halt is not called, it leads irrevocably to the third stage in the law of fall: untruth. That is what happened in this case. It is a natural consequence. The one who commits an unlawful act tries to hide it from others and this compels him to lie. Nor is this all. The one who lives in a state of constant conscious inconsistency, who continues to live outwardly as a Christian with prayer and even practical work, and at the same time gives up the struggle against his sin, ends by himself becoming untrue. Slowly but surely his spiritual life and character are being undermined, hollowed-out.

Then it is that such men, in order not to reveal their true character, go so far as to become, apparently, even holier than the others.

It is as though they would drown out the voice of their own conscience and, at the same time, deceive the others as to their own state. Also this psychological characteristic is to be found in the case of Judas. When a certain woman buys, for her own money, the precious ointment in order to bring joy to the Master, Judas plays the part of being offended, and upbraids her because she had used such a large sum for a luxury instead of giving it to the poor! And later, when Jesus makes the statement that one of those who were at table with Him was considering betraying Him, Judas asks, "Is it I?"

Then, suddenly, he sees an opportunity to achieve a coup. He will steal a march on the Master; he will close those lips that could accuse him, the eyes which could search him so uncomfortably, crush with one stroke the alliance that reminded him so painfully of the past: he would betray the Master. The financial side was a minor matter; thirty pieces of silver was but a contemptible sum. And besides all this, he chooses the kiss of friendship as the betrayer's sign!

"And it was night," writes John—at the very time when Judas arose and left the supper table. Night was calling its child, and like a shadow he glided out into the darkness. Joachim Skovgaard had painted it vividly on the walls of the cathedral at Viborg. You saw the others at the table and this figure leaving, his cloak wrapped about him, while

before him glides a gigantic black shadow broken where floor and wall meet; it gave an impression of such uncanny realism that the artist was asked to change it, and the shadow was later concealed by the introduction of vines.

The sin against the Holy Spirit is reaching its consummation: a gradual process that ended when its victim ceased to struggle against sin and to believe falsehood. The devil ascended the throne in his heart.

Was there yet a hope of salvation? There was one possibility still. Or who is there among us who can doubt that if Judas had turned back, even at the very last moment in the garden, and had thrown himself at the feet of his bound Master and clasped His knees and cried, "O Jesus, Master, what have I done—how could I have done this to you, the One I do love—I do—I do. Say that you forgive me, and I will gladly die with you;" yes, who can doubt that Jesus, from the depths of love, would have said, "Judas, dear friend, I thought you would come back; yes, I forgive you; I have never thought so much of you as I do now. Go, and my peace be with you!"? For true it is that there is a riddle in the fate of Judas which we cannot solve and which we shall not be able to solve, because evil shall never become understandable; and when Jesus prays, in His last evening prayer: "I guarded them (His disciples), and not one of them perished, but the son of per-

dition; that the scripture might be fulfilled," He does not thereby explain the riddle, but He does show that the mystery has not disturbed His faith, but that on the contrary He has fastened His gaze upon that fact in the midst of the mystery which could establish the words of Holy Writ and the Wisdom of God.

True, His betrayal had been prophesied, but the prophecy had not said the betrayer was to be Judas; he, himself, had to be willing in order to become the one who was to fulfill the prophecy; and even then, it had not been said that the betrayer was doomed to perdition. Quite the contrary; we must thus understand the calling of Judas by Jesus, to become an apostle: it was not merely that He might find a betrayer, nor was it simply that He might secure an efficient accountant (Matthew could have looked after those matters); nor was it merely for the purpose of increasing His own sufferings, for in truth it must have been a well-nigh intolerable thing to know that one was continually being observed during the most confidential and sacred conversations, by a betrayer. No, it was because Judas really began in uprightness, and because Judas, as Jesus clearly saw, needed His help. And all the warnings, from the time yonder in Galilee until the moment at the supper table when He hands Judas the piece of bread, indeed to the very moment when He mildly censures him by name: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"—all of these

things must not be understood merely as for the sake of the others, in order that they might see that He was not deceived, but first and foremost as so many loving attempts to stop Judas, even in the very last moment.

Yes, indeed, there was yet one hope of salvation, but Judas would not grasp it.

There was another who, that same night, in furious haste, was carried almost as far astray; but he grasped the last hope of salvation. It was Peter.

III

Peter's life shows us two of the circumstances which condition the velocity of fall, through which the law of fall works.

One of these may be called **Changed Times and Relationships**; it also causes changes in our moods and in our understanding.

There is such a great difference between sitting in the friendly atmosphere of the upper room, among the well-known friends, listening to the Master as He tells of the many mansions in His Father's house—and then, suddenly finding oneself standing freezing on a cold spring night alone among evil-minded men, with the raw jests of the soldiery on every side, after one has just seen them lead the Master away bound. His former words had come right from the heart: "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee." And now,

before he really realized it, he had sworn twice that he did not even know "this man."

O no, I am not saying this in order to point once more the finger of scorn at the fallen celebrity. I get so tired of hearing men endlessly preach, after the passing of nearly two thousand years, of this cocksure yet craven Peter, who could commit so terrible a sin. He is altogether too good a man to be thus placed in the stocks until the end of time, and we small ones had best hold our tongues. Yes, he could have stayed away—that is to say, that was the very thing he could not do; he could not help following his Master as far as possible, and the result was he followed Him a little too far. But here is no credit due a person for committing no blunders, if he is the sort who does nothing at all. I want you to understand how this thing could take place. Have we not noted the selfsame thing in the case of him than whom there was none greater among those born of women? Out there under God's spacious heaven with a wide range of vision on all sides, among thousands of listeners, out there it was as plain as day to him: He is the bridegroom, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire!—but in the dismal, clammy, dungeon cell of the prison of Machaerus, lonely, forgotten, while the days crawled slowly by—doubt spread its bat-like wings and gave him no

peace of mind until he had sent messengers of longing to the Master Himself.

We are all familiar with festive evenings in brightly-lighted rooms, where we are elevated by song and where the Word touches our hearts. The sight of so many good and happy people gathered about the things that concern the Kingdom of God makes it so easy to believe and causes us to make the decision: Now I mean business! I will belong to the Lord always! There is to be no limit to the sacrifices you will make for the Kingdom of God hereafter!

But there are many of us, too, who know how things may appear to us only a very few days afterward. We are perhaps walking along a busy street—since that purposeful evening we have experienced a disappointment or something equally painful—and we are struck by this endless stream of people, each intent on reaching his destination, the din of cars and wagons, the street cries, the clanging of street cars: O where is God in all of this? Do they give God a thought, all these busy human minds? Does He really rule on the earth, among all these bewildering throngs? And this is in the center of Christianity. How many of these people are concerned about Calvary or reckon with it at all —not to mention heathenism's millions far out yonder? O God, where, O where art Thou? And it is as though the contact with

all of this worldliness has swept away all of the blessed memories of that evening; and then indeed we are not farther from the second stage in that sure velocity of fall than was Peter.

For this is the second thing every one of us must reckon within himself: a vague possibility that he may himself commit the unthinkable—the very worst.

This is the wild beast in man. For I hold that there is in each person not only a keyboard of the richest and most beautiful possibilities—love and joy, knowledge and genius, love for nature, and poetry, and music, and art, the ability, in fact to cultivate and develop and enjoy all these things, but there lie also, in the depths of the soul, black keys alongside of all these white ones, roots of every sort of aberration and crime. Whence do I know this? From Jesus' own words: "For out of the heart," said He (not out of some hearts but out of the human heart as it is by nature) "come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man." These are His words. There is the germ of a murderer, an adulterer, a master thief, and a denier, in each of us. So I have long since ceased to judge those whom the Pharisaic world and its newspapers so mercilessly pelt with filth—those who are at variance with the civil laws because they have not

understood the art of covering their shame as well as others, or because they had not the environment of protecting forces from the days of childhood as you and I had.

But beware. For I shall teach you a saying of the German philosopher, Nietzsche—a piece of remarkably clear picture language which you shall not easily forget, because it arouses your imagination so strangely and so uncomfortably. Says he: "Die wilden Hunde bellen in deinem Keller" (the wild hounds are baying in your cellar)! In the depths of the cellar of your soul, in the realm of the subconscious, whence the dream-dances of fairies and elfin webs arise like evening mists on the meadows, whence the unexpected impulses and sudden feelings and notions come, where memory's pictures hang in long rows and recollection's library stands, volume upon volume—there the wild beasts also are rattling their chains and baying in frenzy to be loosed, that they may rend that which is good and pure in your life. Guard well the wild hounds, yea, guard them well, for on the night they slip from their chains they may drive you into an abyss.

Thither Peter had nearly gone. When that cold, feelingless, God-forsaken evening, out there in the court of the high priest, had laid its clammy mists upon his soul, and the fire of coals had caused his eyes to smart, and the piercing gaze of many eyes had confused his

mind—it was then the wild hounds tore themselves loose from their chains and became the bloodhounds of Satan; and almost as though it had been the spirit of a criminal speaking through a medium, came the most fearful oaths from the lips of the Lord's disciple, hitherto so loving and dependable.

It was then, I say, that he was just as close to damnation as Judas.

But why did he stop, at the last moment, on the brink of the abyss, while Judas hurled himself to ruin?

A most vital thing indeed—to learn the answer to this question.

Judas despaired; Peter did not. And strange though it at first may seem, this is yet true: the last deciding stage in the law of fall is despair.

Then the sin against God's Spirit is complete, when the soul despairs of God's will to save, comes to a complete standstill in its struggle, and surrenders. For the worst misfortune is not the fall—it is a misfortune only when you lie there and make no attempt to rise. All is lost to him who loses courage.

Peter did not lose his courage. A look from Jesus, notwithstanding the fact that sobs shook the strong frame of the hardy fisher, was enough to give him courage to cling to life. That was the turning point.

For true it was that other and much more powerful forces fought that night for posses-

sion of his soul, and he had been told of the struggle. Satan had desired to tempt him. For very naturally Satan would like particularly well to plunge an apostle to his ruin; therefore the church ought always to pray most for her leaders, for they are in the greatest danger. This does not mean that the evil one does not willingly take an obscure soul into the bargain.

But if the church forgets her duty, God be praised there is One who does not forget. Jesus prayed that night that His disciple's faith might not fail, and we may yet reckon with His strong intercession. Nevertheless in the last analysis it is the human heart itself that decides which of the struggling forces is to have the victory. It was therefore that Peter was forewarned. He failed to pay attention, as we so often fail: I shall not fall in that sin; all the others, perhaps, but I could not imagine myself falling into that. Yet it was that very sin into which he fell, because he was not on guard. Therefore it was that the cockcrow came as a reminder.

The cockcrow came also to us. Something hindered you at the last moment—grave news of one that had gone wrong: it could just as well have been you! A word that suddenly flashed into your memory—the cockcrow, the cockcrow!

And then Jesus had to be led across the courtyard at that very moment, from the palace of Annas to that of Caiaphas. There

was no time for words, but they used their eyes: Jesus looked upon His disciple and the disciple burst into tears. But that glance gave him courage, for O, what a world of sorrowing love it revealed! Just then the raising of Peter commenced, and it continued when he received a special Easter greeting from the risen One, and it was completed that morning on the shore as they stood about the fire of coals (alas, what did not that fire of coals remind him of); and the thrice-repeated question: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" again caused the tears to flow, as he made his scarcely audible confession.

He took courage. But tell me, when one has a book like this in his hands, and is sitting this very moment reading it, what is it all but the eye of Jesus looking at you? It looks upon you to say: "Take courage."

CHAPTER IX

Jesus' Will Concerning Us—And Who He Was, Illustrated by His Own Words and by References to Certain Moments in His Life

I

AS soon as He had gone away, they began to long for Him. There is a melancholy note in what one of them wrote concerning "the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us," just as we say concerning a really intimate friend, adding perhaps, "but those days are past." And how often has not this desire come to us: "O, if only one had lived in those days!"—or in yet stronger fashion: "O that He had come in our time, so we might find out in what town and street and house He lived, and go to Him, to see Him and to speak with Him—and to bring to Him those we so desire shall find Him!"

More than once we are told of the unparalleled impression His person made upon the people of His day. Hardly had His first disciples heard and seen Him before they felt themselves irresistibly drawn to Him. We are told that when He had delivered His first public sermon in the synagogue of His home town, first enrapturing them, then offending

them by His words, that the mob cast Him out of the city and drove Him a good mile up the mountain side to a sharp ledge; their purpose was unmistakable. What happened? Did a company of shining white angels with silver wings come to His rescue at the last moment and fly away with Him? No, we are told nothing of the sort. Did His faithful disciples encircle their Master, saying, "Our life first; touch Him at your peril?" Alas, they did not, more's the pity; perhaps they have not been able to get near Him at the moment —at all events, nothing of the kind is told. Listen. We read: "But he passing through the midst of them went his way." That is all. He turned toward them, and they made way. It was the power of personality over the rabble. One of the other writers tells us that a body of soldiers was sent out to seize Him by night in a certain garden where men knew He loved to go. They had lanterns and torches and weapons; surely they were numerous enough to seize one. Then Jesus steps unexpectedly out from the shadows of the garden. There is nothing said to indicate that there were angels in His company, or that His figure shone in the darkness. He simply stepped forth, alone, and asked, "Whom seek ye?" The effect was so overwhelming that the soldiers backed away from Him, and some of them fell to the ground. The reader is acquainted with the Passion play of Ober-

ammergau, where pious peasants in costume enact the sacred story. One who witnessed the play and who was really gripped by the earnestness of it all told me that this part of the drama fell absolutely flat: none of the spectators realized why the soldiers all toppled over. The worthy soul who played the role of Jesus of Nazareth obviously lacked that which alone could make the scene understandable: the powerful impression made by personality.

This is often the case we find ourselves in when we desire to approach and contemplate the figure of Christ: we are not, as were His contemporaries, confronted by the person of Jesus Christ, and it is difficult to gain the true impression of Him, for it is so long since He was here.

True enough; yet there is this remarkable thing to be noted: after all, there is not one of the personalities of the past toward whom so many people in our time stand in so personal a relationship as Jesus Christ. Every so often a new Napoleon-enthusiasm appears, and there will doubtless always be worshipers of Goethe; but when all has been said, the relationship between these worshipers and Napoleon or Goethe cannot be compared to the relationship between the Christians and Christ. At bottom they can neither care for the man Napoleon, who all his days was a lieutenant, nor Goethe, who was well padded and a thoroughgoing worshiper of self. But

there are thousands who to this very day stand in a relationship of personal worship of and confidence toward Jesus.

This is unparalleled, for not one of the other founders of religions or spiritual leaders have wished to be, themselves, worshiped. Buddha turned men away from his own person, and Socrates sent man into himself, and Mohammed wished at the most only to be the sole prophet of God. But Christ bound His religion for all time to His own person, and to this day Christianity is Christ.

How then is it possible to come into relationship to Him, to receive such an impression from Him that He wins one's confidence and worship notwithstanding the distance, historically speaking, that separates us? This shall be the subject of our inquiry in this chapter.

II

At the outset we might remind ourselves of the fact that even during His life on earth there were those who did not believe in Him —that the great majority, in fact, did not. And yet there was far more to be seen than His person, if all the reports of His miracles are true.

To be sure an effort has been made, especially by the rationalist group, both earlier and modern, to scrape the gold from the Christ-figure and to pare away all the miracles from Jesus' person and life. This may, of course,

be done, but the net result of such a process is that exactly nothing remains.

It is not my purpose in these pages to enter into the question of the nature and possibility of miracle. After all, that question is like all others, in the last analysis a personal one and of secondary importance. Miracles are not so miraculous to the one for whom the person Jesus Christ is a miracle—no more miraculous than the sparks that fly upward from a fire. Christ Himself was strongly opposed to being sought by men solely on account of His miracles, and He refused indignantly every request for a sign from Heaven, as they called it, by which they meant so spectacular and sensational a miracle that all men at one stroke would perforce believe in the doer. On the other hand He was simply unable to refrain from doing unusual things—so it would seem—by reason of His inexhaustible compassion and desire to help, and as the fourth Gospel especially points out, by reason of His unbroken and mystic connection with the Father in Heaven. Hence He would at times reproach His contemporaries and especially His closest friends, because they had so faulty an understanding of His person and being, occasionally pointing to His works, since the other was insufficient for them. "At least believe me for the sake of the works"—so in essence were His words on one occasion.

Here again, so far as our own times are concerned, we are in somewhat of a difficulty. We

have seen no miracles, and as for those we read of, well, it is all so long ago that it seems difficult for many modern people to believe in them. It is bound to be so when men propose to criticize the miracles without first studying Jesus Christ Himself. The miracles simply attracted the attention of His contemporaries, but they found themselves then confronted by His person and had to form an opinion of and take a position toward Him.

There are other works which men in our day ought rather to fix their eyes upon. I am thinking now of the effects of the power of Christianity down through the centuries and in our own times. One is tempted to cry out, "If ye will not believe His words, at least believe for the sake of the effects of Christianity which ye see!" For instance, he who has seen, as the author of this book has seen, the heart-rending lack of compassion which characterizes heathenism, the degradation of woman which still obtains in China, India, and Japan, will begin to set a higher value upon the workings of Christianity in a people. Add to this the remarkable power of Christianity to rejuvenate itself: how it makes new advances in each new era. In our time we think of the spread of the gospel in heathen countries, a thing which in point of rapidity and thoroughness has not occurred since the apostolic age; or we think of the Christian Youth movement, within which there is the Christian Student movement, and again within which the Student

Volunteer movement, the first a mighty army of young gathered in every continent about Jesus Christ to serve Him, a thing Church History has never seen paralleled; the second with tens of thousands of students and professors of all nations; the third with over 10,000 trained men and women who have taken upon themselves as a life-work the planting of Christ's banner in regions where hitherto it has never stood; and we in Denmark can point to the Copenhagen Church Movement which has supplied a resisting and materialistic capital city with nearly forty new churches and has gathered, through voluntary contributions, millions of crowns (Kroner). Add all these things together, I say, and there will be reason to marvel at the potency of Christianity.

But I acknowledge that this reference to works has always been a two-edged sword. For after all they are too few in number; and there have also been many wicked deeds done in the name of Christ. His contemporaries knew how to parry the impression made by His miracles. At times they were not allowed to witness any, and again they credited them to the devil. At all events they lie farther from us than from them.

III

But there is a better way to form an opinion concerning the person of Jesus Christ and to come to know His thoughts and inner being, and that is by listening to His words.

For they are still before us in our day. In the four gospels which have come down to us we unquestionably find authentic sayings of Jesus Christ. It is entirely an arbitrary thing to attempt, among the sayings of Jesus as they have come down to us, to separate spurious from original. Those who have made the attempt have never had any criterion other than their own preconceived ideas. There are, according to their views, things which Jesus must not have said (as a rule it is stated categorically: "may have said"), and so (they say) He has not said them, if they happen to be found in the gospels. As a matter of fact this scientific method is not worth a particle more than the method used by a spiritualistic lady who honored me with a visit recently. She informed me that spiritualism was richer in blessings than other systems, and when I ventured the remark that I had hitherto considered the teachings of Jesus Christ as the richest, she answered, "Spiritualism is the teaching of Jesus Christ."

"Which of Jesus' words are you especially thinking of?" I asked.

"I am not thinking of any particular words," was the answer. "Our teaching is that everyone must save himself."

"Then it is not the teaching of Jesus," said I, "for its essence is that it is Jesus Christ who saves us."

"You cannot cite a single saying of Jesus,"

said she, "which says that He died to save men."

"I cannot cite one but many," said I. "For instance: 'the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'"

"That is a later addition," she cried.

"Thank you," I answered. "Here we must end the discussion."

"'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap'—that is our teaching," she persisted, turning in the doorway.

I could not refrain from saying again, "Thank you," adding, "That is something you have stolen from Paul."

That the sayings of Christ may have a greater or a lesser value for different people is another matter. Thus when Adolf Harnack in Berlin is reported as having said something to the effect that this one saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" is worth more than all the words concerning the atonement and the sacraments, the truth is this, that for one individual such a saying may have become the golden key which throws open all the glories of Christianity to him.

It is also one of the marks of genuineness in Jesus' sayings that they cannot be changed, even for literary purposes. This may be seen in the desire of pious and well-meaning English writers, particularly women, to write stories in which the scene is laid at the time of Christ, and Christ appears as one of the

persons. But it is significant that when He is represented as speaking, they dare not put invented sayings on His lips, with the entirely proper feeling that such words would seem flat and dull. His words are of another and higher order. So they choose to have Him use certain Biblical expressions, by which, to be sure, He makes rather a poor impression as of an automaton, as though He could never think of anything other than what we have so often heard. But it reveals the fact that the sayings of Jesus which have come down to us are original: He must have spoken thus, for who could have invented such sayings?*

And we realize what a profound impression His speech must have made upon His contemporaries. Also this is told us repeatedly.

As early as His first great speech, the sermon on the mount, we read that the people were astonished, "for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." We see them before us, these motley hosts, how, little by little, as He speaks, they lift their heads: He calls upon something within them which raises itself and stands erect at His words. But when He has made an end of speaking and it is very still, they all involuntarily let their heads fall again—now the question was, could they keep all of the things He had said? And later, as they were

*The author himself has, since this book was written, undertaken the use of this genre (his so-called "Fantasies"), choosing to use such words of Jesus as have come down to us *outside of* the Gospels.

rowing homeward, or when at home on their little farms, they talked of the experiences of the day, as they doubtless have done, they would say, "He who sang for us to-day sang with His own bill and had new notes within His own breast; I did not understand everything, but it did my heart good."

Nor were the naive peasants up yonder in sunny Galilee the only ones upon whom He made an impression. We are also told how He could grip the refractory folk in somber, stony Judea. It was the minions of the law who were sent out to seize Him, but who were themselves so gripped by His speech that they returned without a prisoner, and when they are set upon and ridiculed by the council they blurt out, "Never man so spake."

To say nothing of those who followed Him as His disciples and daily listened to His words. Their thoughts were loosed when He asked, "Would ye also go away?"—and the answer burst from the lips of Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Let all the world leave you—we will remain. We have felt the heartbeat of eternal life within us since we began to listen to your words.

We have heard His sayings so often and apart from their true connection, which is the reason they do not make the same impression upon us. Alas, there are so few—they are soon learned. We have had to be content with short summaries. Take the Sermon on the

Mount; undoubtedly He has spoken for an hour or more—and we can read the whole in ten minutes. The best has come down to us, both His main thoughts and beautiful details, feelingly understood and clearly remembered; but alas, how little! They are so liable to become threadbare. I often take up the French or the English translation in order to vary the nuances.

But try for once to come to these sayings as one who was an utter stranger to them might do, clear-eyed, never having heard them; or at least as one who has never given them consideration. When they are allowed to work anew upon us—and in the following pages we shall try to put them in such a light as to enable them to do this—what impression will they make?

IV

The first impression that we involuntarily receive will be this: This man was a genius.

Everyone is acquainted with the incident in which the woman taken in adultery is brought before Him and He pronounces this sentence: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." A stroke of genius. Or His answer, when they ask if one ought to pay tribute to Caesar, showing Him the coin with the emperor's image and superscription: "Then render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"—what is this if not genius? Or when

He gives all of those secondary questions an inward direction: "And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved?" and He answers: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." Genius.

One soon notices another characteristic common to all great spirits: the surprising.

So far as we little "by-the-dozen" men are concerned, having known us for a little time and heard us express ourselves a couple of times, men can guess quite accurately what we will say in a given instance. Jesus always surprises. A woman appears with a fine cruse containing a very costly ointment; and at once there are some of the sour-faced ones who make an appearance of being so dreadfully Christian, who are so very sure that Christ will not approve of such a luxury—that the money so employed might much rather have been given to the poor. Then Jesus takes the floor and to the amazement of all reveals an entirely different train of thought: this expression of love pleases Him, and He takes occasion (for He is able to do so) to appoint the act for world-renown: "Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her"—and now it has been told once more. Or when He comes to the home of the sisters in Bethany, tired from His journey, and one of them at once busies herself with the work of preparing a meal, while the other simply plants

herself at His feet to hear Him—and Martha comes to the door and scolds the lazy sister, and is doubtless justified—in all other instances but not in this, the Guest being the One who has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

His superiority in argumentation is not less worthy of admiration. Here was both consistency as to principles and clear logic in the expression of these principles. The disciples cross a grainfield on the Sabbath and pluck a few ears, rubbing them against the palms of their hands and eating: this the critics interpret as harvest work and as such it is a violation of the third commandment. Really? For then David, in the first place, had done the same, since he and his men had eaten of the very showbread in the sanctuary, driven by hunger. Yes indeed; and furthermore, the Sabbath, then, exists for the sake of man, and not the opposite. And aside from all this: Here is more than both a David and a Sabbath: "the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath." Or we may think of the witless story the Sadducees told of the woman who had been married to seven brothers in succession: "In the resurrection . . . whose wife shall she be of the seven?"—and His clear and comprehensive answer: "Your question reveals a double ignorance—you neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God. If you had known the Scriptures, you would have known that God is often called the God of Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob, and since He is not the God of the dead but of the living, these three great men must also be alive and the resurrection possible. And if you had known the power of God, you would not doubt concerning the resurrection, which will create entirely different circumstances, so that marriage is entirely out of the question, just as in the world of angels." For these very points, the resurrection and the existence of angels, were what the Sadducees doubted, and they neglected the Scriptures.

If we progress in the study of His sayings, we shall often be struck by the beauty and pathos which His words breathe. How graphic and poetical is not a word like this: "When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather; for the heaven is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today: for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times." Think of the parable of the prodigal son: these two hearts, the father and the son, are so profoundly and simply drawn that the story has become the favorite both among cultured and uncivilized peoples. It is as though clear tones of rare music are borne to us from a great, golden harp; as though it were given the eye to gaze into castles of ruddy evening clouds, when we listen to His earnest, compelling words: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house

are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you—." And that impress of beauty remained upon Him until the last. It shines out to us still in that last fascinating little parable suggested by what He saw about Him: the new-leaved acacia trees along the wayside and the withered branches from Sunday: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children . . . . . For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

There is yet a thing which strikes the close observer: newness. Even when He is speaking of old, well-known things, He is always casting new light upon them, true to His own saying as to the ideal householder "who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The theologians tell us that parables were known before Jesus told His. Probably they are right, but if so, their parables, at any rate, are quite forgotten; and He has made them perfectly His own new form of art; and when He saw the same birds and lilies and fields the others had seen, He read therein the secret script of nature which no other eyes had been able to see, and He explained it to us.* It was as though He Himself stood in a mystic relationship to life that pulsated in all nature.

*For Danish readers Carl Koch's "Jesu Lignelser", especially Part II, is recommended.

V

Yet all of these things concern only the form of His sayings.

But speech reveals His **thoughts.** And if we hearken to them, we shall commence truly to look into the rich soul from whence they came.

That is to say, not all at once. First they lead us into ourselves. They reveal a world to us which we had not seen before.

There was something He called the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven). That was the burden of His first preaching, and in later days it seemed to them as though the sun arose over the regions along Lake Galilee when His voice was heard proclaiming the Kingdom. The Kingdom seemed to lie back of everything one saw, as the reality: the wedding festival in the King's palace, where they were busy roasting in the kitchen and setting long tables in the great hall, and whence the maidens went out with blazing torches to meet the prince; the farmer sowing his golden seed in the dark earth; the day-laborers going out to work in the vineyard; the sheep nibbling the green grass along the roadside; the mother kneading dough in her kitchen; and the children playing funeral in the market-place—all of these things became pictures, shadows; when He spoke it was as if there lay another world behind all these visible things, shining clearly through it all and becoming the only real world. Yes, it

would one day illumine everything and raise it aloft transfigured, and His world-encircling thoughts would have no rest ere He saw His Kingdom extended to every inhabited land. But it all had its beginning from within, in the hearts of men. Thence it would first well forth as a transcendent feeling of joy, a reflection of the peace of heaven in the soul, a power which knew no bounds. It was the absolute that He brought and declared. He spoke so that men believed. If one gained the whole world but lost this, it was all of no avail; but if one's eyes were opened, he would go and sell all he owned just to possess that pearl or raise that treasure.

And attesting the reality of the absolute, He thereby sounds the challenge of the absolute. He flings the banner to the breeze for us, sets the ideal, far above the righteousness of the times. My Father in Heaven is perfect—be ye likewise. A gust from the eternal heights passes over the consciences and spirits, cleansing but chilling. The law is no longer a series of civil paragraphs; it enters into one's inmost thoughts. He commits adultery who but looks upon a woman to lust after her. He is a thief who fails to give his needy brother what he asks for. He is a murderer who steals from a man his courage by calling him tiresome or impossible. He is an idolater who nourishes worry. He who protects his own skin loses eternal bliss. He who would follow after Christ must take up his cross and follow Him

to the place of execution. Let the one who would join the household of Christ consider what it means to hate father and mother and even self. The gate is narrow and the way straitened, and few find it.

Thus He spoke. And as He made His lofty challenge, He gave to them who would listen the most joyous courage. For He Himself gave what He required, and found the point of contact in the human soul where the work which should end in perfection could be begun. And the point of contact was the child in us, the humble spirit, frank receptivity, a coming to Him in repentance, the honest will, simple confidence. And so He began by saying to the crowd that had gathered about Him and found places on the green slopes of the mountain side: "Blessed are ye!" He would not break the bruised reed nor would He quench the smoking flax; He healed the sick souls, and He called the poor in spirit blessed. The only people He could do nothing for were the self-righteous.

He helped men in God's name. He looked upon all who were willing to come to Him as gifts brought Him by God (John 6:37). He gave new life to the sorrowing and faint-hearted by forgiving their sins in the name of God. Seeing Him, they saw God. I repeat: seeing Him, they saw God. It was God whose Kingdom was the absolute, the highest good; it was also God who now came to them in

His person and words and brought them God's peace.

In this way they themselves were put in touch with God. The world of prayer took on new reality and arched its heaven above them after He had taught them to pray. They saw Him pray, night after night, and they heard Him time and again encouraging them to pray. He spoke of prayer in picture language, taken usually from the relationship between father and son, pictures that were at times humorous, as for instance the one of the man who was hustled out of bed (Luke 11), and the matron who threatens to blacken the eye of the judge (the Greek expression used in Luke 18 warrants such a translation). And in speaking of prayer He used the most natural, straightforward expressions: "if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them"; "ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"; yea, "all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." They followed His advice and tried their hand at the practise of the art of prayer; and they discovered powers they had never even dreamed of.

And what He said to the group applied to the individual. Then it was they flocked to Him, now wildly enthusiastic to follow Him to the ends of the earth, now hesitatingly at night by a private door, now with ingeniously

planned questions as to the greatest commandment, now with unplanned genuflexion right on the highway in restless striving after blessedness. And at such times He spoke to each individual as though there were no others in all the world at that particular moment, and in so personal a way that each felt as though he was looked at through and through, to the very bottom of his heart. To the thinker He would say: "You must be born anew." To the rich youth: "One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, . . . and come, follow me." To the one who wanted to be with Him always: "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee"; and to the dying thief: "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." There were those who found happiness enough for all their life through the words He gave them; others found them unreasonable and incomprehensible, and turned their backs upon Him. But they were never the same afterward—they were elf-shot.

These are the words which still speak, and they speak to us. Often they were couched in such universal language that they are applicable to this very day. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"—this is said to every human soul. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"—it means us all, also me.

But as these sayings first grip our attention by their form and then touch our conscience,

calling, by their content, upon our need, so in the long run it becomes impossible to study them impersonally; they are altogether too much alive for that. It is impossible to maintain an objective attitude toward them. We may let them pass by and act as though they had no existence; but if one commences to have anything to do with them, and to study them, one will be personally drawn into the matter. For it reveals the One who uttered them. Not only do they speak of us, so that we feel as though our lives were an open book, but they speak just as plainly of Himself. It ends as a personal question: Who was He, that He could speak thus? His sayings compel us personally to take a position as to Himself, either for or against.

In the remaining pages of this chapter we shall see how His inner soul-life was reflected in His own words.

VI

One evening in the late nineties I was walking with a number of young theological students along the Saale River near the city of Halle. It was a clear moonlit evening; a peculiar dreamy haze of silver hung over the old willows that drooped along the river's edge, looking remarkably like animated things. We talked of the person of Christ; we had stopped and had gathered in a little group around a young teacher who was speaking. He was somewhat older than the rest of us,

and we listened willingly to what he had to say, not simply because he was our senior, but because he was an independent thinker and something of a quiet mystic. And, as if it were yesterday, I can hear him say, "When the time comes for me to write my 'Dogmatics,' it shall commence in Gethsemane." We were all expecting to write our "Dogmatics" some time; one of our number had already become licentiate on so fascinating a theme as "The Setting of Deuteronomy."

Now whether he has written his or not I do not know, but at all events it must be admitted that if he has, and if he remained true to his promise, his "Dogmatics" does not resemble the books of others as to the point of departure. For the others usually commence with God's inmost being, or with Creation, or by an examination of religious consciousness; but his was to begin with Gethsemane. I believe I understand him. For Gethsemane is not only holy ground, it is also a master-key to the understanding of the being of the Son of man Himself. And here we are standing on real, unmistakably historic ground. Think the thought through: the son of a god, writhing like a worm in the dewy grass, begging and imploring his father to remove the bitter cup from him! Such a thing has never had its rise in the imagination of man; not a single one of the old prophecies foretells a Gethsemane. It is told because it really happened. The sorrowful picture had burned itself so

deeply upon the memories of these sleep-drunken, saddened friends that when later they told of that night they use a word in His own mother-tongue: "Abba," that is, Father. The words still echoed in their inner ear every time they thought of that night, His own lamenting accents, fearful, pleading, trembling: "Abba, dear Father." Never had they seen Him so before.

We cannot but ask what it was that had caused Him to lose His self-possession so completely, and had crushed Him down into such a depth of anguish and terror. One of the Greek verbs used hints at hair-raising fear, and Luke the physician tells us of the physiological phenomenon, since noticed in others, though rarely, that He sweat blood.

Was it the thought of having to die? He had often spoken quite composedly of that, and He had not a few times placed Himself in positions of great peril.

Well then, was it evil memories that were crushing His conscience? Impossible; according to His own words He knew naught of sin in His own life, and had challengingly asked His enemies if they could convict Him of anything that was wrong.

No; His own words show us the truth clearly so that we need not guess. It is the cup, the drink which His Father gives Him to drink, and which is so terribly hard to drain. It is the calling which we saw Him take up that day at the Jordan, and which now un-

veils all its fateful consequences. From north and south, from east and west, from the long-departed past and from the far-distant future something has been bearing down upon His soul like swarms of bees—an army of foreign sin, so vivid, so horrible, as though it were all His own. He had made Himself one with sinful human beings. He stood upon the shore, as Spurgeon puts it, but the spray from the howling breakers out yonder is already drenching Him. Thus ended the calling which He had longed for throughout a long youth: to die with all conceivable sin upon His heart.

That calling He accepted; He fought His way through the feeling of anxiety and bowed to the Father's will: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." And suddenly it was there again —the Mystery—an angel-greeting which again repeated the assurance that the Father's love was there, everything else notwithstanding. The last victory had been won: the Ideal had come upon His life's way, as the inexorable requirement, and He had paused a moment and turned His head away from it and prayed that He might, if possible be freed—and at last he had bowed under the necessity and fulfilled all righteousness.

From now on He goes through all horrors with head erect. It is one of the few historical happenings which post-apostolic literature has made reference to: the unknown author of Hebrews has taken, so it would seem, Gethsemane as his dogmatical starting-point. His

thought seems to have been: All this He had to suffer, even though He was the Son, but He learned obedience from what He suffered, and was perfected through it all, and was answered with deliverance from all His anxieties, and is now exalted to be our High Priest.

VII

But this tension between Ideal and Mystery, this struggle between the claims of His calling and the "Yes" of His will, which at once reveals His true human essence and opens a vista into His secret majestic thought—this is glimpsed as it finds expression before this final catastrophe. The greatest religious exaltations in His life usually came as seals upon a filial obedience, even though it brought suffering with it.

There is an instance in His life which is far beyond, or far above, the commonplace. It has no parallel in Israel's sacred memories of the past, just as the Messianic prophecies have no word to say concerning it. But it is the only incident which the apostle Peter reminds us of in his old age, shortly before his death. It would seem to have become one of his brightest memories from his youth, and he had kept silence about it long enough. We shall hear his own characteristic words: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received

from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount."

The reader knows now what is here referred to. The time had come in Jesus' life when each step in His journeying brought Him nearer to Jerusalem, the city which, so to speak, had a patent on the killing of prophets. But before He had, to use Luke's characteristically gripping expression, "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," He had with-drawn for a time into solitude, in order to become accustomed to the thought and to help His friends to do likewise. Up along the snow-covered slopes of Hermon whence the Jordan springs and where Pan's cool grotto is hollowed out—the most northerly point Jesus visited during His earth-life—there He talked with His friends concerning the fact that He was to suffer much and to die upon a cross.

And when He had strengthened His own soul with these thoughts which were so difficult for the flesh, and repeated them a few times to His slow-witted friends—then it came again. This night of transfiguration was granted Him there upon the mountain, in which heaven-ascended ones, great men, who had also walked a thorny path and had at last mysteriously vanished from earth, came and spoke with Him of that which was soon to

come; and again the voice of the Father gave assurance of His love toward the beloved.

It was again a higher initiation into the Mystery after the deeper submersion in the sufferings dictated by His Ideal.

The one of His friends who was most deeply gripped by the experience and who interrupted, in transports of joy, returned in memory to the experience in his last days, as has been mentioned.

—Jesus came to Jerusalem and stood one day in the temple, speaking, as He had so often done, to the people. None knew what He knew: that it was the last day He was to stand there and speak to them. Next day they would come up as usual to the porches to hear Him; but they would not be able to find Him.

A party of Greeks comes, desiring to see Him. A couple of His friends come to tell Him about it (see reference to this in the chapter on Philip), and at once He is deeply stirred—this unexpected message from the great heathen world out yonder reminds Him anew of what it is going to cost to win the world. There are usually a few strong gusts of wind that take hold of the tree-tops and bow them deeply before the oncoming storm; we shut all our windows, for it will soon be upon us; and soon the first great drops begin to fall. So also a profound tremor passed icily through His soul that Tuesday of Holy Week —a Gethsemane before Gethsemane. It is most

remarkable; He speaks half-wonderingly, and deeply moved, to His soul: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?"—but catches Himself at the words and says, firmly and quietly, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." And while the multiture hears only the roll of thunder, He hears the well-known, beloved voice saying: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." It was the Mystery again, that wonderful affirmation in His soul immediately after the submission of the will. He had not lowered His ideal, notwithstanding the nameless suffering that awaited Him.*

And on Thursday evening the storm broke. It stole forth from the shadows of the Garden and fell upon His soul. O, it is all so human: we may become never so familiar with the thought of the sorrow and gloom that is about to come upon us—when it does come and we are suddenly overwhelmed by it, it is still terrifying and takes us unawares.

VIII

I have called attention to these passages which have an inner relationship each to the other because they so clearly show us the man Jesus Christ—and each time in the most

*This occurred on Tuesday of Holy Week. Since I first noticed it, the thought that none of the events and sayings which are given us from the last week can naturally be set down as having happened on Wednesday, has made a strong impression upon me. All seem to have fallen on Monday or Tuesday. This means that He has withdrawn into solitude, doubtless outside Jerusalem, and prepared His soul for that which was to come.

intimate association with His calling. A man and his work cannot be separated from each other—if the man is as he should be. There is much happiness on this earth which we can do without, but we cannot do without a work.

The name which Jesus liked to use for Himself agrees perfectly with these thoughts. As everyone knows, that name was "the Son of man." It was, so to speak, His incognito. Jesus used the term with a peculiar secret joy, and later asked His closest friends who men thought that He, the Son of man, was. It is not entirely clear whence He has taken the name—perhaps from one of the visions of Daniel, perhaps from the eighth Psalm, of David. But the content of the name is plain. As He walked among men, He felt Himself as one of their number, and as one who really was a man, as man was ideally intended. He desired to do His service among men. This is the door that leads into His inner world; here is the way to learn to know and understand Him.

The reader knows, perhaps, that the dogmaticians formerly propounded a vague teaching concerning "the two natures of Christ," a divine and a human nature; that by virtue of the former nature He knew and could do certain things which, by virtue of the latter nature He did not know and could not do, and so forth and so on—a theory which modern logic cannot but reject, wonderingly and with

aversion.* But when they then undertook to show the so-called human nature in Christ, they would usually mention such things as these: that He slept, and ate, and hungered, and became tired, and wept. The last, to be sure, is of an entirely different sort; to weep is in truth human, as we may recall from the last part of the first chapter of the Jungle Book. But it is a strangely low estimate of the human nature that would stress these purely physical functions, most of which we have in common with the animals and which also a god could present if it pleased him to do so. There are entirely different and far more profound glimpses into the depths of His humanity which shine forth from His words and sayings or reveal themselves vividly in His moods.

What sadness and pathos, so truly human and indeed so full of beauty, are not contained in an expression like this: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." It is as if He had gazed long at the wild birds as they happily winged their way home to the holes in the cliffs along Genesaret, and feels how homeless He is. What an insight into His deeply moved soul does not a word like this give—at once filled with impatience and trembling: "I came to

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The Central Committee, in harmony with the foremost theologians of the American Lutheran Church, does not agree with the author in this paragraph, nor with the Danish school of thought here represented.—*The Publishers.*

cast fire upon the earth; and how would I that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Can one imagine more melancholy words than these: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"—one of the few really pessimistic utterances we have from His lips; surely everyone can hear the ring of their genuineness. Surely those who cared for Him could not have listened to these words without saying, though perhaps not aloud, "O Jesus, here, in me, you shall find one upon whom you may depend." And there is a saying in John's Gospel which gives us a most sorrowful glimpse into His lonely human soul: He "did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men . . . he himself knew what was in man." In contrast to this, note that beautiful, joyous greeting with which He welcomes His friends on that last evening, after making as thoughtful and festive preparations as possible for them: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." And then remember that foggy morning that followed the clear night that we considered a short while ago—when He came down into the valley again and met the people of the lowlands with their troubles and their wrangling, which strikes Him like an incoming wave, and He saw the father coming with his poor epileptic boy, and for a moment He was almost overwhelmed by it all and cries out: "O faithless

and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" —but quickly He catches Himself, and with an effort of the will He cries out, "Bring him hither to me."

I would beg of my readers to pay especial attention to such words as do not contain a saving truth or which do not reveal a mystery, for they pulsate to this day with life and reality, and depict His humanness more than many lengthly descriptions could do, and speak with a realism that never could have been invented. At times they can, by their genuine humanness, convince us of the truth of a miracle which we should otherwise have had difficulty in believing. For instance, that He should change water to wine at a country wedding is apt, at first glance, to seem like so unbelievable a luxury, so unreasonable a waste of divine powers, as to tempt one to decline to believe it. But that He at first refused to do it—that is surely not an invention. He declined firmly, because the hour which He so often spoke of and which only His calling could govern had not yet come; and then He did it nevertheless, out of love, but entirely unnoticed and in secret, with a modesty which no legend would have conceived; not even the ruler of the feast found out where the wine came from. It is such things as these one must note. Sometimes there are more convincing reasons than empirical proofs, for instance striking psychological certainty and

primariness. In determining the genuineness of a given Scripture passage or incident we may present reasons pro and con, finding for instance, three reasons for, and seven against. Nevertheless, even with the seven reasons arguing against its genuineness, it may still be more scientific to accept the three, because the reasons speak with such an unconscious realism that they weigh more than they number.

There is still another trait which should be mentioned in this connection, because it is so all pervading that one might almost say it characterizes His humanity; I have referred to it before: it is His compassion. India's Krishna laughs and dances always; of Christ it is continually being said that He was moved with compassion, when confronted with spiritual starvation, temporal want, or human sorrow and suffering. And never does it appear in such classic fashion as when the multitudes remind Him of neglected and wandering sheep having no shepherd, and He cries out, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest." We see how His human emotions can never be separated from His calling. This compassion does not cause surprise in our time, but my observations in the heathen world, with its measureless lack of compassion, have caused me to believe that compassion is a power which Christ brought into

the world. It is so wonderful a power that it seems as though it must be able to perform wonders. I have the impression that when Jesus, on a certain day, was approaching the village of Nain, it was wholly for the purpose of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and that it was far from His thoughts to perform a so-called "wonder". But when He met that widow walking behind the pallet that bore the body of her only son (His own mother was in all probability a widow at this time), He was deeply moved with compassion for her, and what happened thereafter does not cause me to wonder any more.

IX

The words and moods which I have touched upon all lead inward and serve to disclose His human soul. But there are also sayings of Jesus which have particularly to do with the outward things, sayings that reveal His person and character to us. They impress us by the ethical earnestness to which they testify, by the inexorable consistency which existed between His spoken words and His own mode of action, between what He says and what He is.

He taught that one should love his enemies, bless those who curse us, and do good toward and pray for those who hate and despitefully use us. And we find that one of the last words from His dying lips is this: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they

do." He taught His friends that no man had greater love than this, that he laid down his life for his friends; and He gave them His life the day after. He said that they ought always to pray and not to faint, and again and again we see Him, after a long day of uninterrupted labor and speaking, going up into the mountains "a great while before day" to pray. He left us the saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive; surely His life must have been thrice blessed, for He did nothing else but give—now bread to the hungry, now forgiveness of sin to the repentant, and finally His life to the world. He invited the whole human race to come to His school: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;" and on the last evening, when it was perfectly clear to Himself that He had come forth from the Father and that He would go unto Him, He arose, took the pitcher, poured water into the basin, bound up His smock, and commenced to do the work of the lowest slave, to wash the feet of His disciples—even the feet of Judas the traitor. He uttered that remarkable word concerning the omnipotency of prayer: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"—and He showed us the triumph of faith when He stood before the rocky grave of His friend Lazarus, while the dead yet slept within, and in the presence of His mortal enemies thanked His Father aloud, because He had already heard His prayer.

X

In his Gospel John at first calls Christ the "Word" (Logos). And He was already the "Word" in this sense, that He was what He spoke. But He was the "Word" also in the sense that John meant*: He said what He was, and who He was. He brought a revelation. He said things directly concerning Himself that no one else before or since would dare to apply to himself.

He declared that He was sinless. He challenged His bitterest enemies with: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" and none made the attempt. And in His last evening prayer He stood face to face with God and said of Himself that He had accomplished the work which God had given Him to do. He has either borne a burden of hidden sins and faults (in which case He has possessed less than the average person's minimum of self-knowledge and has deceived both Himself and others), or He has described Himself just as He actually was, without sin. Nor did His judge find any fault in Him, and the one who betrayed Him bore a testimony as to His innocence before he threw himself into the arms of disaster. And thus His picture is drawn four times and differently by sinful and failing men, and none of them have shown us a fault in His actions or words. Would this have been possible if they had not had before them as their model the realized Ideal?

*Not that this by any means exhausts John's Logos-concept.

And He placed Himself, His person, in the foreground in a way which no other founder of a religion has dared to do. We have touched upon this at the beginning of this discussion. We see Him place Himself before the entire race saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden (and who is not included here?), and I will give you rest." He says, "I am the light of the world." Only a madman—or the Light of the World—would speak thus. The union of His calling with His person could not be more plainly stated.

It is of importance that this be driven home. All too early did Christendom commence to put the teaching about Jesus in place of faith in His person. It became a condition of salvation to hold the correct, orthodox view as to His place in the Trinity, or as to the inward relation between His two so-called natures. Instead of a personal relationship to the Savior's person, men placed a philosophical view of His being. The same misunderstanding obtains to this day among the opponents of Christianity: the confidential relationship to the living Jesus Christ is confused with the acceptance of such and such a number of Christian doctrines. There is a popular notion to the effect that God has propounded a certain number of theological rebuses, as for instance that 3 equals 1 and 1 equals 3 in the Godhead; that God butchered His own Son in order to forgive us; that the world was created in six 24-hour days, etc., and if one will

but say "Amen" to all this, he will be rewarded with Heaven; if one protests, he will be burned in all eternity in hell. We accept neither this caricature nor any line of reasoning that parallels it. We are never told that Jesus put forth as a condition of salvation that one had to recite the Creed or the catechism. If one had confidence in Him, the relationship was established. The rest would come later. It is just the same today. If one cannot understand where Cain's wife came from; if he cannot accept the thought of an eternal damnation; if he cannot reconcile the picture language of the Bible with the findings of geology; if he cannot connect any ethical conception with the thought of a substitutional sacrifice—well, he can for the time being let these things alone. In reality there is but one question on which one must take a stand—that which He stated thus: "What think ye of the Christ?"

In taking this standpoint we reject both the new rationalism (Modernism) and Unitarianism. They may be stepping-stones to Christianity and in so far a step forward from agnosticism, but they cannot be called Christianity. While orthodoxy puts the doctrine about Jesus in the place of faith in His person, modern rationalism puts the so-called "teachings of Jesus" in the place of Jesus Himself. We cannot recognize Christianity in the statement that He Himself is of no consequence to us—and that it is simply what He taught concern-

ing the untroubled, pious spirit and love toward our fellowmen that counts. He and His teaching cannot be separated. It is confidence in **Him** which alone gives us confidence in His **doctrine.**

For He **has** a doctrine, and He asserts it with all the authority of His personality. He sets it up against that of the fathers and says, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . . but **I** say unto you." It was this authority which struck them all. By virtue of it He cleanses the Temple, armed only with a scourge. It gave Him that courage that could never be halted—"Herod would fain kill thee," said some of the Pharisees, and He answered jestingly, "Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected." And by virtue of that self-confidence and authority He granted the forgiveness of sins and sent men and women away with His peace.

But upon closer examination we shall find that this authoritative self-consciousness is, when viewed from another angle, the deepest and humblest dependence upon His heavenly Father. "He hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him." And again, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing." It is especially John who has noticed this aspect, although we may get a sudden glimpse of it in the other Gospels: "All things have been

delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

To state the matter plainly, He said that He was the Son of God. He sits in a room on earth one night and says, "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." Heaven was where He was. But it became clear to Him that Heaven had always been His home. That last night, when He poured out His heart to God in the hearing of His friends, in the intercessory prayer, He said aloud to His heavenly Father, "Glorify . . . me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." We ask, would He have dared to pray thus if a consciousness, a shining memory of the eternity He had lived with God in Heaven had not become clear to Him in His inmost being? Therefore His last command to those to whom He had entrusted the task of continuing His work was this, that they should make disciples of all the nations and baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

And so all that He was, He was and willed to be, in relation to us. He and His calling were one. The Son of man among men—so He desired to be; a follower of His own sayings, so that we might be His followers; sin-

less, that He might forgive us our sins; completely Himself, that He might give Himself completely; thoroughly dependent upon the Father, that He might reveal to us the Father's name; the Son of God, that He might share His inheritance and sonship with us.

He told us who He was, but at the same time told us what He desired of us. He would be either the head of the corner or the stone of offense. None may evade Him. His cross stands at the parting of the ways on humanity's thoroughfare.

The next discussion will show us the positions taken by His contemporaries with respect to Him—and the positions they still take.

CHAPTER X

The Attitude of Christ's Contemporaries to Him—and Our Attitude to Him

I

THERE is a question which has long occupied me and interested me to a great extent. It is this: What were the motives that actuated the people who were responsible for Christ's death, to send Him to the cross?

Understand me—I am not asking why He had to die. He died because He Himself willed to die. He had early become accustomed to the thought of death. His first utterance in Jerusalem that has come down to us touches upon His death and resurrection and was, oddly enough, the saying which the false witnesses succeeded in turning against Him: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He had also said openly that no one was able to take His life away from Him —but that He had power both to lay it down and to take it again. Nor did it take long for His friends to learn to see God's plan and decree herein.

But this is not the question to which I have referred. The thing which cannot but make us marvel greatly is this: Why, after all, did men strive to take His life?

The matter is by no means uninteresting, still less is it valueless or barren. We are not so tremendously different from the people who lived in those days, and there is a species of an eternal present that hangs over Calvary. It was they who did it; but would we not have done the same?

Now we are so fortunately situated as to have rather a comprehensive fund of material which may be used in answering this question; and there are several widely different points of view, each of which supplies something to the others, all casting the clearest light upon the situation. It is these which we shall now examine.

II

It is made very plain that the judge who condemned Him to death did so very unwillingly.

Anatole France has written a little sketch in which Pilate, now an aged sufferer from gout, meets a friend of his youth in Gaul in the Riviera, to which place, as is well known, he had been exiled. They talk of olden days, and the friend who, as a youth, had been sent into exile from the imperial city to the miserable, far-away province of Judaea because of his thoughtless actions, chances to refer to a youthful infatuation with a delightful Jewish character. He had suddenly come to repentance through this prophet's influence; He was on everyone's lips in those days—what **was**

His name? Why yes, you condemned Him yourself, you must be able to remember it—O yes, I have it, Jesus of Nazareth. But Pilate is gazing out over the Mediterranean and only says, **Je ne m'en souviens** (I cannot remember).

The purpose of the sketch is presumably to show how episodic the crucifixion was, how slight an impression it had made upon those who had most to do with it; and if this is the case, the author is simply revealing his own monstrous ignorance. If, on the other hand, it is designed to characterize Pilate in accordance with the descriptions of him in the authentic accounts, the author has but emphasized one characteristic of Pilate—his shallowness, which is especially noticeable in his well known rejoinder, "What is truth?"—an utterance which we may imagine him giving as he turns on his heel with a shrug of the shoulders. I have heard it explained as indicating that the student in Pilate the official is coming to the fore: at first he is interested in this remarkable prisoner and has sympathy for Him, but when the prisoner begins to speak of "truth," he has had enough. "O dear, so this young person is still interested in truths; that was what we, too, learned at the university in Athens where every new rhetor had a new truth; fortunately we have at lost gotten beyond the point where we ask concerning the truth."

If, therefore, we are to believe Pilate has forgotten that whole proceeding, it must have been due to the mental debility that sometimes comes with age. For at the time, it absorbed him more than he must have wished, and embarrassed him not a little. It is surely plain that he made a strong effort to release the accused; for instance his ruse in suggesting that the people choose between Jesus and a notorious and dangerous criminal was clearly designed to secure freedom for the former.

The motive which finally conquered has also been made known to us. When the Jewish leaders began to hint at an appeal to Caesar and to suggest that the release of this pretender might in Rome be misunderstood as a species of **lése-majesté**—only then did the judge draw his sword, so to speak. And herein we have the first answer to the question: Why was Jesus sentenced to death? He was sentenced because His judge feared men.

But God forbid that fear of men shall ever have the slightest part in the forming of that judgment which each of us shall have to pronounce upon Jesus Christ. For none may avoid passing judgment in respect to Him. None can wash his hands and consider the whole matter as something that does not concern himself. The accused is insistent; once for all let us realize that He stands before us and demands to know our decision. We cannot evade Christianity—each has his share in the affair.

Not all classes of society are in the same situation in this matter. It is very hard for a young merchant, and still harder for a young mechanic, to bear a Christian testimony without having to suffer ill-treatment at the hands of his comrades and having to hear that which he most reveres sneered at and trampled upon. That is as far as we have come in our love of liberty here in our highly enlightened and democratic little country! The student class is a little more fortunately situated. When we exclude a very few tutors and teachers from consideration, we find that education has taught us to respect the religious views of others. But we must all be very careful that fear of men shall not have the slightest share in the choice that we are to make. It may seem, to a physician or a lawyer, rather embarrassing to admit that a pastor's preaching has caused him to change his views, and this is especially true if the individual happens to have been previously known as a freethinker or a dissipated person. To a certain extent, too, it may hinder a career if one must consider the will and desire of Jesus in choosing one's scheme of life and company. But the one who allows himself to be led by such motives (the opinions of others, and possible lost opportunities) will be an invalid for the rest of his life. His character has suffered shipwreck, his self-respect is injured. As in the case of Pilate, he will one day be condemned to exile; he has shut the door leading into the Kingdom of

Truth. "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another?"

III

We pass to an examination of the next motive. We have seen what finally moved His judge to sentence Him. But what about His accusers? Why did the Jewish scribes and the priestly party insist on putting Him out of the way?

Again we are fortunate in having more than mere conjecture to guide us. We have the opinion of an entirely unbiased contemporary. The man is Pilate himself. For he, too, formed his own opinion of the case. As a heathen he was absolutely uninterested in taking sides with either of the contending parties. As we have seen, the hearings convinced him that the accused was innocent. And as the case progressed he perceived the motive of the accusers. The following sentence will be found in the papers that have come down to us: "For he perceived that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up."

Envy is undoubtedly the second reason why men crucified Christ. The sin which caused the first fratricide caused also the murder of the brother of all men.

Envy is one of the sins in which it is absolutely impossible to find anything good. It is murderous; it murdered its object also in this case. For behold, all ran to hear this new, self-taught teacher; the benches were empty

when the orthodox and theologically trained teachers spoke. Folk coming to the Passover had no other question than this: Will the prophet of Nazareth come? The synagogue might be empty, forsaken, but there would be thousands gathered on Galilee's beach listening breathlessly while Jesus, the son of Joseph, stood upon the deck of a little boat a short way from the shore and spoke.

There were but two things between which to choose. Either their sin must be forsaken and they themselves go out and take their places upon the learners' bench before Him who was in truth a teacher from God, or He must be put out of the way. Envy must die, or He.

And they chose His death. But may God forbid that a sin which we refuse to give up should once more be the cause of His death—and pronounce the death-sentence upon Christianity when it comes into our life. The Scripture speaks of crucifying Jesus Christ afresh, or treading His blood under foot. Once for all this matter must be settled and the choice made. Christ cannot be served together with the harlot. Prayer cannot thrive, in the long run, together with questionable habits. The one who compromises with sin is through with Christ and will end by opposing Him. This is what we have touched upon elsewhere in these pages: It is our mode of living which determines our view of life, not the opposite. Vice versa it is our mode of life which de-

cides our views, not the contrary. In the case of many young people the struggle will be fought especially in the field of sex.

God make us all manly and true, and teach us to fight on the right side. I know more than one who gave up the struggle and is now dragging his colors in the mire.

IV

There is yet a third motive. We should be doing these deceivers of the people an injustice if we looked upon envy as the only motive for their action. There was One who looked at the matter differently, and that One was the innocent Accused.

It is a matter of the greatest interest to find out what His opinion was, and this can be done. We are deeply moved when we become acquainted with His judgment. While Pilate simply saw envy as the reason, Jesus saw it as ignorance. The first words we hear from His lips as He hangs on the cross are these: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." In the next chapter we shall dwell more in detail upon this marvellous guilelessness: where we sinful men and where any child sees the blackest sin—His loving eye sees literally no sin; for these people are, after all, ignorant.

And He is right, beyond a doubt—ignorance, or if we prefer, mistaken orthodoxy. Remember how it all came about. The Messiah was expected in those days, but men had formed

their own expectations according to the times and conditions in which they lived. A mailed fist was needed which could send the Romans packing, and create a free people in a broad land. Men read the prophecies with spectacles which were adjusted to accommodate that view. And then came—this poor young carpenter from Nazareth, and wanted to be the Messiah! The Messianic promises had to be looked at from entirely new angles if they were to be harmonized with this reality. They were not capable of this spiritual adjustment. Their concepts of religion were offended, and they chose to put this disagreeable reality out of their way, retain their old views, and continue to wait for a Messiah. They slew the living Messiah in order to keep Him on paper.

And you may be sure of this—ignorance concerning things religious and of Christianity itself, in our own day, in many places, is the reason why men hold the living Jesus at a distance.

In this a greater responsibility falls upon the enlightened and cultured classes than upon the others. For they should have learned from the scientific method that sense of righteousness and reality which will not permit the utterances of hearsay to hinder real life from coming to them. And I would remind you that while theological orthodoxy is certainly on the wane in our day, freethinking orthodoxy is in fullest bloom. There is far greater

danger of dogmatic freethinking, especially among our student groups, than there is of dogmatic faith. Unbelief hovers in murky clouds over the faculties of our educational institutions. The greater number of educated men and women get their conceptions of religious matters through philosophy, novels, magazines, and newspapers! The living Savior may pass directly before their eyes and they are completely blind to the fact, because they have learned that He must not exist. Even among enlightened people there is a firmly rooted and widespread ignorance about the Bible and religious things. Concerning which there is this to say—that ignorance is excusable only for a certain length of time and only to a certain extent. The day will come when we shall be found to have been to blame for our own ignorance, and the condemnation of history will come upon us, because we closed our door to life when it came and knocked.

V

I find yet one more contributing motive in that sentence of death. Thus far we have spoken only of the upper classes, the judge and the accusers. But what about the rank and file of the people? Why did they also, at the last, call for His blood?

The historical narrative gives us an unusually clear and characteristic answer to this question. Let us look at the words of the

text itself: "But the governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two will ye that I release unto you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What then shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ? They all say, Let him be crucified. And he said, Why, what evil hath he done? (There is the question: What evil hath he done? Speak up. Step forward and tell us what your complaint is—what have you against Him?) But they cried out exceedingly, saying, Let him be crucified."

Now what does this mean? Just this: "We have not the faintest idea as to what evil He has done; He is simply to be crucified." And why? What has called this insane hatred into being? The answer can be given in a single word: Agitation.

They were not His enemies; many of them were His good friends. Here is a man whose little daughter He would have healed; here is one whom He had fed when he was nearly dead of hunger; wherever we look we see people who had listened to Him many times, fascinated, and who had desired to make Him their King. But if ever you are looking for proof of the power of agitation, just study the story of Good Friday. The agitators have known how to utilize the very last moments. Poor Mrs. Pilate seems to have done her part, although against her will, toward bringing on what did take place. When her husband had hit upon the plan of letting the mob

choose between Jesus and the bandit, she intrudes upon the court-scene, sending a messenger post-haste to warn her husband against having anything to do with this man who has disturbed her dreams.

Some time elapses in the receiving and considering of this information, and during this interval the last agitation was set in motion. The text says, "Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." They "persuaded" them; another passage says, "And their voices prevailed." Plainly sentiment has been divided. They were successful. Had the art of printing been known in those days, thousands of extra papers would have been printed with large headlines:

NAZARENE, SCOURGED, CONFESSES BLASPHEMY AND TREASON

Sentenced to Be Crucified

They did the same thing by word of mouth —surely one could not but believe the chief priests.

What happened then happens also in our day. And the rank and file are in greatest danger. Whence this hatred of the church, this hatred of pastors, this hatred of Christ, among the great laboring population? Has the church harmed them? Have the ministers injured them? Has Christ? They cannot truly make such accusations. Many of them, especially the multitudes who have come to the

great cities from the country, have pleasant memories from the church. As a rule they have met excellent ministers; and if there have been those who failed to understand socialism and preached against it, or who took the part of the wealthy, the truth is nevertheless that the majority of the ministers give most of their time and energies to the service of the poor. And as far as Christ is concerned, the man of small means has aways had in Him their sworn friend, and he knows it. But —agitation. Daily agitation—drip, drip. The scribes are the only spokesmen, and they gain the upper hand. In our day it is the power of the press. The masses will cry, "Away with the church! Away with Christianity!" And if one asks, "What evil have they done?" they will cry yet louder, "Down with them!"

"Why?"

"Well, that's what they all say."

There you have it. The papers have said these things, so they must be true.

It is sad; it is pitiful. Yes, and yet there is this hope in the situation: they must be dealt with individually, for then they are entirely different men. And the day is coming when they shall have better chief priests and scribes: our Christian youth and the students of our day and the teachers of the future—these will one day go out and persuade the masses.

Again I say, God forbid that spiritual indolence should hinder any of us from perform-

ing that duty toward our fellow-men. It is so easy to think as all the others do, and to leave to the chief priests and scribes of this world the right of having an opinion, and contenting ourselves with thinking as they do. It can be forgiven a laboring man, but it can never be forgiven a student.

VI

I turn away from those who sentenced Him to death, to look for a moment upon those who chose Him as their Lord and Savior.

What motives drove them thereto?

In the first place, they were attracted by His person. His personality and His words won them; never had they met such a man before. They came and announced their desire to be His disciples. We have seen this in the case of both John and Philip. Of the depth of His being or the scope of His work they understood but little. But He called and they followed, moved by a holy instinct.

Time passed, and a crisis came—that moment when the great multitudes turned their backs on Him; the great results were too long in coming, and His speech was too personal. Then it was that He turned to His disciples with the question: "Would ye also go away?" And one of them gave that glorious answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God."

Their progress is unmistakable. Now they believe because they had noticed that it helped. They have had religious experiences. They have noted an inner change in themselves, at first in clearer apprehension, then in their whole spiritual life; a joy and an independence, a power and an assurance which they had not known before; and since all of this came from Him alone, it could not but lead them to the assurance that He was the Holy One of God, that God was in Him.

This inner faith, which was always connected with His person, was established as a certainty through outward facts. It almost failed them when He died. But it awakened to new hope when the rumor of His resurrection reached them; nevertheless they were very unwilling to trust the rumors before they had seen Him with their own eyes. All doubt fled when they met with Him again and He interpreted the Scriptures to them. And once more He appointed a meeting in Galilee, and when they were with Him there in the old, well known places, the dead memories arose from their graves and all the experiences they had buried with Him lay revealed before them in the light of the resurrection. And later, when the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, they knew and were assured in themselves that it was the living Savior who came near to them in this way. A series of inner experiences and a chain of incontrovertible facts united, and made this the most certain

of all things to them, that Christ lived. They were as sure of this as that they themselves lived, and they staked their lives upon their conviction.

VII

Now if one should ask me what can give the Christian in the twentieth century the assurance that Christ lives, or, to make it still more personal, what do I build my Christianity upon—it is my duty as a Christian to give him an answer. As Peter says, we must be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh us a reason concerning the hope that is in us." At times, either because of inner reasons or because of other men, we are obliged to revise our answer, and it happens once in a while that we are forced to draw the lines that mark our fortifications so as to make them somewhat less extensive than they were.

There was a time when I was of the opinion that the resurrection was the surest proof of the truth of Christianity. That is not my opinion now. Understand me aright: I know that Jesus is risen; but I do not think that it is a proof. To make of it a proof would be the same as to deliver it, the resurrection, to the historians, and may our Lord deliver us from falling into the hands of the historians. Wilhelm Tell shot no apple from his son's head, for according to the historians it is doubtful that Tell ever existed, to say noth-

ing of the son and the apple. It is not likely that the prophet Jonah ever lived, not particularly that exception is taken to the story of the renowned whale, which the historians doubtless could have swallowed, but on account of the great awakening in Nineveh, for the historians have found no other accounts of it. With all due respect to the historians, they, too, are men of like passions with us, and they are not a little subjective. As to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the historians of our day know nothing of it. They know it not, for they know not the Resurrected One. And we will remember that He revealed Himself to His disciples, not to His enemies, and He pursues the same custom today. Only faith in Him can make the fact of the resurrection a reality to us. Let me say, however, that the probability is all in its favor. After all, the burden of proof to the contrary lies with our opponents: have they a better explanation? To date none has stepped forward to present it. And it would be a very bold step for them, too, when Paul, who was no moron, and had his wits in the best of order, points to five hundred persons all of whom had seen the resurrected Christ at one and the same time, "of whom the greater part remain until now." But only faith in the living Savior Himself can change this preponderant probability to an irresistible certainty—at least that has been my experience.

Well then, how do we come to a living faith in Christ?

There are three things that are especially to be noted.

The first and deciding factor is this: the impression which Christ makes upon me. Nothing can be compared with this in importance. I am simply unable to evade Him—for I have tried to do just that. But He overwhelms me. From His four biographies emerges a complete, harmonious picture, the genuineness of which is convincing, incontrovertible. I listen to His words, and not only does He fulfill my deepest need, but He also lays a claim upon me with such authority that I cannot hold back. He requires worship, and thenceforth He may reckon with mine.

For I have met Him in His Word. But I have also met the living Savior in His church, in its life and confession, indeed in its very existence, most of all in its individual members. I have known times in my life when I had become tired of the Bible, and His figure stood, as it were, in mists and shadows, so far as I was concerned. Lo, He came forth to meet me, convincingly, in the persons of vital Christians. Perhaps it was in a Christian biography—and one should always have such books near at hand; perhaps in a Christian friend who had come into my study —and one ought always to have one such friend. I have elsewhere mentioned some of the illustrious dead, Christian personalities

through whom Christ shone, whose characters had been molded by the Christian Student Movement. We shall not soon forget the impression Speer's book on Hugh Beaver made upon us the first time we read it. I did not meet him when I was in America, for he had already entered into that land which after all lies not so far from ours, but the spirit of the 23-year-old student still hovered over us when we assembled, a year after his death, in the places where he had received his spiritual baptism. I have stood at the death-bed of the Danish Hugh Beaver, M. Samuel Jørgensen and witnessed his triumph over death. It was a privilege to be young with him. I can still hear the lively, contagious laughter of Horace Rose—we were together and were photographed at the famous hay-stack-monument in Williamstown, and I remember yet the mark of reality that was upon him as he rose at a meeting and, upon being asked, led us in prayer. He spoke, if you will pardon the expression, right into Heaven. Those who have seen and heard John Mott will know what I mean. We saw Christ in a human being when we saw him. And, God be praised, there are those among us who are less worthy than he, but Christ is not less worthy in them. And until our last day on earth, and afterward, we shall say, "God bless each of you, and God be thanked that I met you; it was the good fortune of my youth that you met me on life's way; and

time and again, after you had been in my study, I could not but think of the word in the prologue of John's Gospel: 'There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John'."

And finally, in the third place, our own experience proved that faith did help.

One of our opponents came to me recently, after a meeting, and said, "I have just written a book against you. That is to say, I have not mentioned you by name, but I was thinking of you when I wrote. My opinion is that your method with the young people is harmful."

I answered, "It will be difficult for you to prove that it was my method that harmed them, if you know of anyone who really has been harmed. But I can show you many who will confess to you that they have been helped by my method. I have seen young fellows who were, so to speak, flat on their backs, who were whisked to their feet with incredible speed, shoulders squared and heads erect. I have seen those who were discouraged and reserved transformed into frank and cheerful souls. And if you ask for the reason, they have but one explanation to offer: God came into their lives. The only compliment I ever prized was given me by a young polytechnic student. Said he, 'Ricard, you have made me independent'."

It helps to believe God—that is our third proof. Note what Jesus Himself said, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know

of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." It was entirely upon this passage that the late Bishop Heuch based his apologetics.

The will is the point of departure, and our religious experience is the result.

Christ calls upon our will. And when Christ calls, there ought to be but one answer: Here, Lord!

CHAPTER XI

His Thoughts in the Hour of Death

If any man would know what sin is, he must go to Calvary; and if any man would know what grace is, he must also go to Calvary.—Rudolf Frimodt.

I

SEVEN times He revealed them. "As a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." This is a Good Friday picture painted by the prophet centuries before Good Friday; and as the silent King they remembered Him in later years (Isa. 53 and 1 Peter 2); but seven times He broke the great silence and spoke to those who would listen. And just as one may see the great ocean through a tiny crack in the planking, so one may see a whole world of love and suffering if he will listen to the words of the dying Savior and read His thoughts in them.

And these are the thoughts which it is important for us to see. So little really depends upon the depiction of His physical agony. That is long since past and did not last so very long; and even if we believe that the Son of man possessed a finer and more sensitive nervous system than the rest of us, there are nevertheless those, in the torture-chambers of the Middle Ages, in Russian prisons, and

on the foreign field, who have had to endure both longer and more cruel tortures. But that which passed through His spirit, that which He bore upon His heart, that has eternal significance for us, and it is good for us to consider it.

—And it was right after they had nailed Him to the cross and raised His tree. The devil had saved one of his last and worst temptations for Him. As He hung there and saw human beings at their very lowest, human beings who scoffed at a defenseless, conquered enemy; priests and scribes who gloated over Him in satisfaction as they wagged their heads and flung malicious questions at Him; and people whom He had helped—one, perhaps whose little daughter He had raised from the dead, another whose sight had been restored, gaping at Him without raising a hand in His defense; and a band of raw soldiers who never even respected a dying man's right to die in peace, but roughly cast lots for His clothing as though He were already dead, shouting as they threw—I say, as He hung there and saw all this, the temptation might easily have presented itself to despise and hate these miserable vermin. Now I see what ye are—faithless, evil-minded, ungrateful, hopelessly coarse and now I shall die for myself and ye can do likewise; I despise all that is called human.

It was the temptation to lose His love for men that Satan had kept until the last. For

it is not so difficult to care for the little village boys and girls with their curly hair and chubby hands, under the blue skies and the shining sun; nor is it so hard to love those who are suffering and unhappy, when one goes about among them and is well and strong himself; but to have to love coarse, faithless beings when they allow their wickedness to overwhelm one and thus repay the good one has done them—more than human love is needed for this. What if His power to love had failed Him? What if He had called His legions and given up His work? It seems as though I see His eyes searchingly, anxiously looking out over all those heads: His power to love would forsake Him, and He is seeking anxiously for something to love.

Behold, His gaze kindles, and peace, almost satisfaction shows in His face. He has found what He sought, love has whispered her explanation in His ear.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

"And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"—so spoke Peter afterward to the men of Jerusalem, and Paul expressed the thought beautifully: "had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But the One who first thought thus was their Master, their guileless Master. All the rest of us, sinful men and women, and even the simplest child among us, can point out sin and shud-

der at the blackest crime the world has seen, this taking the only righteous and innocent One, stamping Him as a criminal, and torturing Him to death. But right here our guileless Savior sees no sin. Why, they don't know what they are doing; who can then be angry with them? And at once the Master fulfills His own commandment by blessing those who are cursing Him, and by praying for those what hate and persecute Him.

We look into His soul and see that He has given all His enemies a place there, but He knows nothing of their sin.

O, guilelessness—and He is the same today.

Know that you have a guileless Savior, and He thinks of you as He thought the day He died; for He "is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever." And you look into your own heart and back over your own life, and you blush over yourself and are affrighted at your sin; but He sees you also, and sees no sin at all. "Forgive him," He prays, "he did not know what he was doing." Alas, there was perhaps a time when you really did not know, but now you know, now it would be adding a new sin to all of the old sin if you were to say, "I did not know what I was doing." But "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 John 3:20), and knows more than we; knows, in His guilelessness, that we did not know what we were doing!

II

Suddenly there was a stir in the crowd. "Make way; it's His mother." And they stood on tiptoe to see.

"Where?"

"Is that the one?"

And involuntarily they made way.

There she was, a little, bent figure, worn with grief, her face deadly pale. A strong young man held her by the arm or she would probably have fallen; now they were standing at the cross of Jesus, His mother and the disciple He loved.

Perhaps they came to comfort Him, but the words died on their lips when they saw all this misery. And so it was He, the Consolation of all the world, who had to comfort them; and the poorest man in the world gave, out of the riches of His heart, to each of the two the most loving word He could find—to each of the two who were dearest to Him He gave the other.

Yes, now it had come upon her. She had felt it coming from the day she brought Him, a tiny child, to the temple to make her offering. It was perhaps the only time their poverty seemed a bit hard for her. People of ordinary means usually brought as their offering a little lamb when they came with their first-born to the house of the Lord, but they had had to be content with a pair of doves. And yet she had been so happy that day—all of the old people in the temple had looked

so kindly upon the two young people, and they had taken the child in their arms and said the most wonderful and glorious words about Him, and had rejoiced so much over Him. But suddenly, as old Simeon was standing there speaking lovingly to the little child, he had uttered that remarkable, mysterious word, and a pair of large black eyes with long lashes looked up at the old man in alarm. What does he mean?

"Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul"—Joseph, what can he mean?

And now it had come. Now the cold, sharp sword pierced through her mother-heart and slew all her joy. There He hung, her noble Son, her beloved Child, dying.

He saw what was passing in her soul, and His thoughts were only for her.

His first miracle had been a gift to His mother. His last word to her was also to be a gift, a truly good gift.

— —"They have no wine." His first thought was that it was a bit unreasonable to come to Him concerning such a matter. And He had allowed her to see this, for He would always be true, and she said no more to Him, but told the servants to do as He bade. And then He fulfilled her wish in the most unobtrusive way; not even the witty caterer should know of His act.

How small such things seem, how unreasonable all our little worries seem, when a great, incomprehensibly heavy sorrow comes

upon us and is near to crushing our hearts. Whether there was little or much wine at a country wedding (suppose they had had to get along with water the rest of the evening), what difference would it have made when they were all young and happy. But now—, but now—, now all this world's joy was dead forever.

He had time to think of this: how was His mother to get along after He was gone.

"Woman, behold, thy son!"

And to the disciple He loved: "Behold, thy mother!"

We are looking right into His heart, and His mother is there. How human, how beautiful, how natural! The sin of the world is laid aside for a moment; He must first arrange for His mother's earthly future. The mocking of His enemies is unheard; for here stands a friend, the friend He had loved most because this friend had understood Him best. I know you will be good to mother. "And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home."

O Thou Son of man—and Thou art the same yesterday and today and forever! Then I know that I need not apologize to Thee because also I have some loved ones to whom my heart clings. Thou understandest me, Thou who also didst have a mother whom Thou didst love, and a friend whom Thou didst prefer. Thou dost sanction and bless the most precious earthly ties. When we fol-

low Thee, we become good sons and faithful friends. Thou dost care for my mother, and when I no longer can fulfill her slight wishes nor help her in her last great need, Thou dost somewhere prepare for her a home where they will be kind to her. And when Thou seest that we human beings have come to care much for one another because we are understood, and they are good to us and desire only the very best for us, and we choose them as our best friends, Thou dost not look upon it with disapproval; Thy warm heart is pleased to grant us also this happiness, and we receive our friend from Thy hand, knowing that he will be a blessing.

III

There was one who asked Him for something.

Jesus knew that voice, the voice of a human heart in need. In that moment He heard nothing but this man's voice. Clamoring, shouting, complaining, blaspheming, cursing, mocking—He heard none of it, for there was one man who asked Him for something.

That was the only thing that could have stopped Him. The warnings of His friends, the threats of His enemies, all the terrifying images created by the devil, all the seductive effort of the tempter—nothing had been able to stop Him on His way up to Jerusalem. But when one cried out, "Thou son of David, have mercy on me," a poor blind man by the way-

side—, then Jesus stood still. That alone could stop Him for a moment on His journey to the holy city (Luke 18:40).

"Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

We do not know this man's history. Whether he had seen or heard Jesus before, or whether this was the first time he had seen Him; whether he was old or young; whether he, too, had a mother, or whether he had never called anyone mother—of these things we know nothing. But he was a human being who confessed his sin ("and we indeed justly —"), and who had looked upon Jesus until he had understood that He was an innocent man and a King in a Kingdom which he had never before envisioned: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy Kingdom."

And he saw aright. It was a King that hung upon that miserable cross, a good King, the ruler of a Kingdom that was worth entering. And he got what he asked for, the word of a King. "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

And again we look into His heart, and the sun shines upon the meadows of Paradise therein. All of His thoughts are peace and hope. This very day He will walk amid flowers in God's good country, and He promises to meet His new friend yonder.

One evening, a few days before he died, the best and wisest man I have known asked me, "Tell me, how do you really understand that

expression of Christ to the robber: 'Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise'? He did not ascend to heaven until after His resurrection, and the dead are not yet raised." I explained to him that by Paradise we should understand the good place of waiting where the pious souls go to await the resurrection of the body, and where Jesus, as a righteous man, also went—doubtless also to bring the light of salvation to those who were waiting. My friend was apparently satisfied with this explanation, and, a few days later, went thither himself to be with Jesus.

Lord, where were you that one day and those two nights?

I can imagine that Peter has asked the Lord this question, or at least that he has speculated much on it later, until the prophetic spirit kindled a light in his soul. When the old apostle re-lived his life in memory, there were forty hours which were darker than all the rest. There has never been a time when the Kingdom of God was so near death as then, for the Lord Himself lay dead in His grave, and faith lay dead in His disciples' hearts. There they sat with their sorrow and shame, hiding away from the world, covering their faces while the tears flowed; and they could still hear His voice ringing in their ears as He entreated them to watch with Him that one hour, and they—they had not even fulfilled that poor request, but they had slept, leaving Him alone in His hour of need.

And while He had thought only of making a memorable evening for them, they had quarreled, though they knew He hated it; and later they had all forsaken Him and one had denied Him. O, had they but known that this was the last night He would be with them! Peter had doubtless dreamed, right up to his last years on earth, that Jesus was dead again and that he was alone with his sin. And when his thoughts went back to those days, they would again begin to seek and to speculate: Where could the Lord have been during those forty hours when we sat weeping?

And the Spirit has anointed his eyes, and they try to follow Jesus as far as they can. They behold Him as He advances through the meadows of Paradise among the star-flowers, with all the pious ones of Israel saluting Him joyfully, as they encircle Him who shines like the morning sun. But did He go elsewhere? And Peter, in the Spirit, sees Him journeying farther, through waste lands, descending into the cavernous halls of the Kingdom of Death, and His torch flares up in the death-cave, and they who dwell there stir and their glazed eyes turn toward the light, and they shade their eyes with their bony hands (I speak after the manner of men), and all the drowned from the days of Noah arise as dead from the sea, and salute the light, and their hearts cry out with joy when they hear the Herald of Light proclaim the gospel (1 Peter 3:20), and Eve, the mother

of all living, mother of all pain, but also mother of all hope, falls upon her face and salutes the promised Seed who comes with the bruised heel, with the marks in His feet, who has crushed the serpent's head, and He opens again the gates (she could still hear the heavy clank of the gate being shut), and He leads into the Garden of Eden those who had slumbered until now.*

Did He go elsewhere? I do not know.

But we are still here, east of the Garden of Paradise, among the thorns and thistles, with death still to come. And we will not thoughtlessly postpone conversion until our deathbed, still less until the Kingdom of Death has closed upon us; for we cannot forget that at the other side of the Savior another robber hung, and that he remained as he was until he died, and had no request to make of the Lord. But we would be with Him today, as best we can, and we will, as well as we may, bring Paradise with us wherever we go, and make the place in which we live a Paradise. And when it seems to us that we are undeserving of this, and we are terrified by our sin, and Death opens his awful maw to crush us, we turn anew to the good King and entreat Him to remember us who are still on earth, now that He is in His Kingdom.

And that prayer He will hear. Among all the songs of angels and the praises of the

*The Central Committee does not sanction this interpretation and belief.—*The Publishers.*

saved, and all the din and lamentation that arises from a sinful world, He will hear a single voice—a human heart in need that prays to Him for salvation.

IV

The sun is darkened.

When next we are allowed to peer into the soul of the dying Savior, it is dark, terribly dark there. Where a few hours earlier Paradise seemed to be spread out in smiling peace and under a summer sky, hell itself now seems to have entered with darkness, emptiness, horror, and lonely helplessness in its train.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The sun turned his face away from this scene of trouble and misery. He veiled his face and grieved with his friend. Darkness came over the whole land from the sixth until the ninth hour.

Was He really forsaken of God? Who is able to say? At least He felt it so. He had once said, "He hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him." But the Father left Him entirely alone when He, to please His Father, obediently suffered death on the cross. You ask if He really forsook Jesus? I do not know, but I ask, Who is more unfortunate, he who fully believes that he is deranged, or the one who is really so? The same is probably true as to the feeling of misery.

We may re-write the account, we may use picture language, we may try to imagine the whole scene as passing before our eyes—the mystery is still unsolved. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"—thus read the ancient law; He who hung there upon His tree had bowed His head under the curse. Paul uses another expression which touches us by its simplicity: "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." In mystic, incomprehensible fashion the Son of man, the second Adam, gathered into His breaking heart all that is called man, all that had lived and should live, with all its guilt and shame, and became as the lightning-rod, drawing down upon His own head all the opened wrath-clouds of the centuries, so that the lightning of God's anger struck down and crushed Him. No, we cannot comprehend it; we can but guess a little of what His feelings have been if occasionally we have tried to share the sorrows of others, to hear their confessions and complaints with sympathy, to put ourselves in their place and try to help them bear the burden, so that we had near become sick from the sin of others. Then we learned that compassion is the greatest suffering, and that which was most akin to the sufferings of Christ.

Still less do we comprehend the atonement. We can barely realize, through imagination, that the One who really goes forth to fetch

us must go down into the Valley of Death into the loneliest stretches of Hell. Alas, it could be nothing less than eternal loss from which we were to be saved, since this had to be. But the mind of God—who can comprehend it? We have not been raised in a state of familiarity with the conception of sacrifice, we have never seen a blood-sacrifice made, so for us Paul's explanation is of no assistance; we take the word as it stands, but it explains nothing. We are far removed from the knightly ideals of the Middle Ages and can only estimate the atonement theory of Anselm in relation to his time.

True, the great authors have come back to this solution time after time, as the only one possible: that the innocent one takes upon himself the guilt of the sinner, suffering for him or her, and thus saving the beloved.

We hear it in the words of Peer Gynt as he hides his head in Solveig's lap, and it echoes in the crooning song of Solveig as she sings him to sleep.

Alma steps out before the judge and lays what she promised in the scales for Adam Homo; and the redeemed soul of Margaret steals over to the Queen of Heaven as she prays for her Faust:

"Incline, oh incline,
All others excelling,
In glory aye dwelling,
Unto my bliss thy glance benign!
The loved one ascending,
His long trouble ending,
Comes back, he is mine!"

But Brandes long ago took exception to this solution as antiquated.*

Nevertheless it is by no means entirely so, for emotion still lives. Is it not still the thought of many a mother when she hears of the unhappy fate of her son, and must look upon him as he goes to prison: "O, if I could but go in his place and take his shame upon myself!" A friend has been known to feel thus for his friend.

And yet, this only portrays the mind of Jesus for us, it illustrates the substitutional, but it explains nothing in the great compact between the Father and the Son, between God and Him who had chosen to become the mediator, the representative of the human race. We need new forms of thought to express this. Has the church stopped praying, in our day, as Paul so often prayed, for knowledge? Time never gets away from God —He is always up-to-date; but all too often it gets away from the church.

There is something in this act of Jesus which we shall never be able to comprehend, for when it occurred, when He took the last, awful consequence and entered in where God's presence could in no wise be felt, He held His peace. This mute suffering is dreadful to think of, and the Danish tongue has given the three frightful hours a striking characterization when it has called that Friday Long Friday; the Englishman sees it from another viewpoint

*Samlede Skrifter, Vol. III, page 270.

and calls it Good Friday. But He is alone in His need. None is so much as permitted to look upon Him; it is dark all around Him, and none are permitted to read His thoughts. He does not confide them to anyone.

For after all, that lamentation: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" allows us to catch only a slight glimpse of how dark it must have been, how terribly lonely it was. Yet in reality it is almost at an end; at all events, it has almost been fought through. For is it not so, that the one who can call upon God is not completely forsaken by Him? The one who can take an expression from the psalms upon His lips (for the saying is from the twenty-second psalm of David), having still the Bible as His friend in need and loneliness when all the others and even God forsook Him, and gave Him His Word through which to make known His need—the one who can say, "My God, my God!" can surely not be so very far from finding His way back to His God. He awakens from His horrible dream with this cry on His lips (we are constantly obliged to use picture language)—and He is standing at the place of exit from the cave of hell and sees the radiance from the sun of God's countenance out yonder.

Why it had to be thus with Him we know not, and how much He suffered no one can realize to its full extent. For He was both otherwise than we and had a different work before Him than any we have had. He was

the Son of God, and how much of this He remembered and experienced during those hours we do not know, but if He clung to it in thought, it has only increased His suffering: to think that the Son of God should be forsaken by God! And this He suffered in a soul that was an entire stranger to sin, and suffered not only the punishment due one individual, but the punishment due all sinners. Only they can form even a very weak conception of the soul-darkness of the Savior, who have felt themselves without peace beneath the judgment of God's anger and who have themselves been in the darkness of hell. I have heard a despairing man say, "There is a hell on earth!" They who have felt hell in themselves have no difficulty in believing that there is a hell. But they also love Good Friday and seek constantly the way back to the cross, not to solve the mystery, but to receive grace. They, too, have cried out from the anguish of their hearts, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet no, He has never forsaken us, but rather, "My God, my God, why have I forsaken Thee?" But when men cried out after this manner, their need was already at an end. Yes, it was at an end before they cried, for He has already taken their need upon Himself and where all such need is still being endured, He is in our very midst.

Noble, He is silent as to His greatest need. There is but a single cry, which we may ponder in the twenty-second psalm of David, a cry

when the worst had ended, that is all. It resembles Him completely, for it is all done from love toward us. His bitterest sufferings He confided to none, for none would have been able to endure a gaze into the horrors of hell; only this thing did He reveal: that He had been forsaken of God—He could hardly imagine why—in order that we might know that now He had fought the hardest battle through for us.

O Savior, I shall never learn to understand your love. Nor shall I ever be worthy of it. Neither shall I ever be able to repay it. But there is one thing that at times I do think I ought to be able to do: I ought to be able to learn to appreciate and value it more.

V

In his extraordinarily beautiful and brilliant study of the Passion of Jesus, C. H. Spurgeon plays much upon the words, "I thirst." Naturally he applies it to the spiritual thirst of Jesus, and says many wise and striking words regarding our thirst after the salvation of souls.

I shall not try to imitate him, one reason being that I cannot do it (who would compete with the Shakespeare of preachers), and another being that this little essay is not intended to be a Lenten sermon, but an attempt to discover the content of the last words uttered by Jesus, in order to come to an understanding of His thoughts. But Spurgeon

stresses beautifully and doubtless rightly this, that the expression, "I thirst," suggests an awakening and a returning to real life after the languishing journey of the soul through the dry wastes of hell. It is an indication of improvement, the dawn of clear thinking, when the patient complains of thirst and asks for something with which to quench it. It means that He has returned, that with all of the consciousness of His soul and power of thought He is here upon this hill, upon this cross, with this awful, torturing thirst.

Yes, He is here—and God be praised that He is here. For now the goal has been reached. It has not been in vain, it was not a chance happening, an unexpected misfortune; it has proved to be the right way, including this last, darkest stretch, and now He cries out, "It is finished." It is the dying conqueror who unfurls the flag upon the enemy's captured ramparts.

Happy art Thou, O Jesus! Then one may, after all, say that His was a happy death. For this is what counts, that we accomplish that which we came to do on this earth. The only thing a man cannot do without is a life-work. Herein are we tested in this life, not by what kind of a life-work we received, but whether we completed that which was given us to do. Some of us will not be permitted to see this. We shall have to be content in the consciousness that we did our best, not indeed always, but in our effort and in our best moments;

but what the result of it all will be we do not know. He saw the result. His death came at just the right moment—when He had seen with His soul's fullest clarity that it was finished.

A finished work! Is there a more sublime vision? Especially if the one who gave His life was at times troubled with the thought, "Will it succeed? Can I carry it through? Especially when it looked, at the last moment, as if the time would not suffice and the material needed was insufficient to complete the work. Christian Richardt has produced a glorious poem which tells of an artist who is about to create his masterpiece when he makes the awful discovery that there is not metal enough in the form—then all of his precious things he casts into the crucible, even at last the heavy golden chain which a prince had once hung about his neck is cast into the glowing mass; and the masterpiece stands before him, finished and complete, while he peers at the haloed goddess that has become a reality.

"What did it cost to carry out your work?" they asked Mr. Hogg, the founder of the noted polytechnic school for the youth of London. "Oh, nothing to speak of," was the answer. "All of my life-blood."

A finished work! Saved, perfect, gloriously new, without blemish, it stands there, saved through all the flames of suffering. What did

it cost Him? Everything—a holy life in obedience, and a death upon the cross.

A finished work—and there were no limits to its effects. The first heathen who saw Him die struck himself upon his breast and grieved over the death of this divine being; and they do the same today, now nearly two thousand years later, when they are told of Him in the mission fields. Perhaps the effects of that reached out to regions and worlds unknown to us. However that may be, only with difficulty and by using violence can one otherwise interpret the universalistic words in Paul's letter to the Colossians: "to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; . . . whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." Nature herself, recognizing her relationship to Him, full of presentiment, had her share in His death struggle: the mountains quaked, the earth was riven, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. Even the King of the Dead could not hold his prisoners: the portals sagged on their hinges when the Son of God drew His last, painful breath, and certain of the dead went forth and revealed themselves in the Holy City, according to the report of Matthew, even though the resurrection of the dead was really not to take place until the last day.

A finished work—and that was His gift to us. He left that for us all. Nothing in it is lacking; it is perfect. All the world was in

His heart when He died, and His soul was filled with peaceful joy over a completed work. We have a victorious Savior and a complete salvation.

He left it to us—He Himself had finished His work. The last moments are entirely His own. But if you love Him and therefore desire to know what happened at the last, listen to His dying words. They are not addressed to us but to His Father. Now they are again together. Not, "My God, my God!" but, as He had called Him from the day He stood as a youth in the temple: "Father!" "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

The Son has found His way home. As though the hard timbers of the cross had been the softest pillow, He lays His tired head to rest in His Father's arms and when the soldiers come with their lances and clubs to do their work, He is sleeping as safely as a child.

CHAPTER XII

His Inmost Being; Our Deepest Need—Illustrated by the High Priestly Prayer

[Read the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel.]

I

I KNOW not where the high priestly prayer was uttered, whether in the room of a house or out among vineyards.

"Arise, let us go hence." These are the words in the last verse of the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel, and it is one of the sayings one comes to love when first one has heard it in His own voice. "Arise, let us go hence"—the words do not contain any eternal truth; they bring us nothing that is directly edifying; but they are the outpouring of the loving soul of a true Son of man. "Arise, let us go hence"—we must break away sooner or later; I should gladly talk with you through this whole sacred eve, but I can see that some of you are already tired, and, to be sure, it must come to an end.

"Arise, let us go hence"—and perhaps they did arise and leave the place. And they came out between the vague shadows and gray walls of the vineyard; several times He has paused and, standing in the center of the little listening group, has spoken the mystic words concerning the vine (John 15), and concerning

trials (John 16). And then, in the silvery haze of the full moon of Passover, with the twinkling swarm of stars overhead, He has sung His swan-song and prayed His last evening prayer, the high priestly prayer, with them.

"Arise, let us go hence"—but perhaps they stayed, nevertheless. O, we know the experience—we were sitting together in a really congenial little circle, one of our number was perhaps to leave on a long journey to be gone a long time, and we enjoyed the last hours, as it were, drop by drop. "Do you know it is two o'clock?" "Two? Well, we must be going"—but we were sitting so comfortably, and there was still something we had not had a chance to talk about; the last street-car had gone anyway; and three and four o'clock passed before the last farewells had been said.

His disciples did not really know that this was the last, holy night; but He knew, and everyone noticed in His bearing that something strange and uncomfortable awaited Him; He was deeply moved and spoke more confidentially to them than ever before; there was the love wherewith He had loved them, with which (literally) He had finished their development—that is the exact meaning of one word which John uses concerning that evening: He loved out, He loved to the last.

And then, in the upper room at the supper table in the low-ceilinged room with its opened folding-doors leading to the flat roof and the azure night, He has called His friends and

promised them sorrow and joy as of a woman in travail; and finally He has prayed the most wonderful prayer in the world.

But whether we are standing behind a hedge in the vineyard or behind the door of the supper room—let us listen.

As a man's prayer is, so is a man. At bottom we are not as men see us and know us; we are only our real selves when we stand face to face with God. But here we are permitted to listen to the prayer of the Son of man. Thus He was, for thus He prayed—even the night before He was to die. It is said that a dying person possesses a singular power to see and remember his whole life, clearly drawn and in an instant of time; and that if the truth were not permitted to come forth before, death is usually able to open the way. Here Truth Himself speaks, His gaze turned toward death. Hence if anyone would learn to know the inmost being of Jesus, let him read the high priestly prayer!

There are twenty-six verses in the chapter. In the first five verses Jesus prays for Himself, and in the remaining twenty-one verses He prays for the others. Perhaps this is the ideal for all prayer-life: to pray first for oneself but most for the others.

Now if the first five verses are able to teach me something concerning His inmost being, the other twenty-one ought to be able to teach me still more as to our own deepest need.

Let me remind you when He uttered them

and for whom. It was for those He loved most, at the time when He was parting from them, so far as this earth-life is concerned, forever. These faithful ones had bound their whole existence to Him; He had asked them a few hours earlier, "When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything?"—and they had answered, "Nothing"—for they still had Him. And now they were to lose Him; He was to pass through great and terrible experiences, but He knew whither He was going at last; it was almost worse for those who remained behind and lost all when they lost Him. And so we can understand that He prayed for all conceivable joy for them, the very best. And that which He wishes for them is that which they need most. Perhaps they have had entirely different wishes at the moment; but these were not the things they most of all needed.

Then hearken once more! In these verses you will learn what is the Christian's deepest need, for we are not so very different from them. Also we are separated from Him; we are to love the one we have never known in the flesh; and while our temptations may appear somewhat different from theirs, they are essentially the same. And so when we read of what Jesus prayed for for His friends on the last night of their association, we shall also learn what is our own deepest need.

He prayed also for us that night. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that

believe on me through their word." We have all come to believe in Jesus through the Apostles—by the testimony which they left behind. So He prayed for us, He carried us in His heart that night. Yea more—He yet prays for us. We have plain testimony to the fact that Jesus in Heaven still intercedes for His congregation. The thought is a familiar one to Paul, to John, and to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is not simply because He is the Head of the Church, who gathers together all its prayers and presents them to His Father; besides this it is a simple consequence of the fact that His love is unchanged, is the same yesterday and today and forever, and the work He finished for all generations once for all, He presents to God for each new generation and for each soul continually until the end of the world. Often we give this altogether too little consideration, and thus we lose what would have been a great, edifying power in our lives. The thought of Jesus' continual intercessory prayer is a powerful reminder to the congregation that it may not only look back to a Savior who once lived on earth, but that it may dare to look upward to a Lord who yet lives and whose heart beats in love toward it. And to the individual, lonely Christian who feels himself forgotten and scarcely knows if he dares to reckon with the intercession of any brother it says: You have a Brother on high who is faithful in His intercession and never forgets

you. I know of an old, rationalistic professor who came into a church one evening and for the first time heard of the intercession of Jesus Christ in Heaven. It became, for him, the entrance into a state of vital faith in Christ.

For whom does He pray? Only He knows—we may only glimpse it. Our situation changes and His prayer takes account of life's infinite variation. But the fundamentals are ever the same, both in the life of the church and in the intercession of the Savior. They are the same as they were that night in His poor friends and in His rich prayer. Strange that this high priestly prayer has so receded into the background in the thought of the church down through the centuries. At times I have wished that it might be ordered read from the altar at each service. And yet its place is perhaps rather in the secret chamber of the Christian. At the very least I should wish that the following brief study of the prayer might lead to a renewed search in it by my readers.

II

It is always natural for a prayer to commence with a confession. We ought truly to be ourselves when we engage in prayer; and when we are true to ourselves, we shall always have something to confess.

Even Jesus makes a confession. But it is so widely different from ours—because He

was Himself so different from us. Now, before the face of God, on the night of His death, He comes before the throne of Heaven and says, "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do." Not only is there no sin for which to ask forgiveness—there are no shortcomings and nothing neglected, to be wept over. The glimpse we are given in this passage, into the ethical valuation that Jesus puts upon Himself corresponds perfectly with the picture that is drawn elsewhere in the Gospels. The others could not convict Him of any sin; He could not find any when He tested Himself before the face of God.

He must have been just as He said He was, otherwise He would be lower than we. For we at least know ourselves; we know that when we approach God we have only transgressions to confess, and it follows that a deep sigh echoes through the soul: "I did not glorify thee on the earth; it is far from true that I accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do." Thus will we speak to God on our last night, when we take the final great retrospect of our life. We are all fallen in our sins; He alone stands upright, without sin.

But He was more than the unique man. Now that He is standing upon the threshold of His Father's palace, He again bears testimony as to who He is and again gives us a glimpse into His religious consciousness. "Glorify me now with the glory which I had with thee be-

fore the world was." I remember it now distinctly; I see it all before me; that is my home—take me home again to Thy glory.

Give to these people who doubt the deity of Jesus these words to read. Explain to them that He spoke thus to God on the last night of His earth-life. Unless they accuse John of having invented the prayer and put it into the mouth of Jesus, the fact is established that according to His own words to God He had an eternal existence and could remember a previous state of being, before the celestial bodies described their first courses through the spaces of the universe.

This, then, is the basis for His prayer: a finished work, without self-reproach, and a clear recollection of the glory He had with God before all time. But the prayer itself is short and most definite: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son."

"Father!" It was thus that the Boy saw Him, that day in the temple; from Him He knew the voice to have come when He went to His work at the Jordan baptism; thus He was to see Him when at last He surrendered His spirit into His hands.

"Father, the hour is come"—the hour I have longed for, yet dreaded, the hour mother tried to anticipate at that happy wedding festival in Cana, the hour whose coming my brothers tried to hasten when I went alone up to the feast, the hour my enemies tried to force upon

me when they cast stones at me—now it is come.

O now glorify Thy Son. Deep in the human soul, and rightfully, dwells this desire for happiness, the prayer for glory. Until now other duties had had precedence. Had the great drama been played between these two alone, the Father and the Son, none would have interfered with that happiness, and the glory would never have been disturbed. But, those "whom thou gavest me" were also to have a share in life eternal. You see, there we have it again—never for very long have we been out of His thoughts. And in order that these "gifts" might be brought safely home, all thought of His own glory had to be set aside for a time, and the narrow, depressing road had to be taken through an inhospitable world. There was scant room for Him when He came; mules and asses had to crowd closer together so as barely to make room for Him. His cradle was not long permitted to stand on the soil of His fatherland—soon the murderer's knife sought Him, and His parents had to flee with Him to Egypt. Infants in His home town had to give up their lives for Him; was He thinking of these tiny martyrs, when, later in life, He preferred to take the tiniest ones in His arms to bless them? Yes, and then came, one by one, the unrecorded days and years—wait, wait, always wait, until the time of release and wandering finally came—and what a journey! The time of song and flow-

ers was but brief; then came the hot, dry summer and the storms of autumn; all would receive His gifts, but the Gift, that for which He had come, for that they had no use; and His foot would grow weary and drag, but there was no time to think of Himself; to glorify the Father and to give to those whom the Father had given Him, eternal life, this was His only thought. But now He was standing at the goal and the pent-up, deep-seated desire for glory wells forth and freely, boldly, and by virtue of Sonship requires its just due: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son!"

And this is life eternal, to know the Father and the One He sent forth, Jesus Christ. Thus He speaks, as it were, to Himself, as He thinks of the others.

To live is to know. That which we do not learn to know never becomes life, so far as we are concerned. In the lives of those who know nothing of music and art the overture to Tannhaüser is incomprehensible noise, and they themselves are as stone when confronted by the most gripping poem in stone, as for instance Bartholomée's monument for the dead, at the entrance to the cemetery of **Pére la Chaise** in Paris. A person of whom you have not the slightest knowledge does not in reality live, so far as you are concerned—he does not interrupt your life, he means nothing to you. But everything which you learn to know, and with which you have something

to do, steps into your existence and becomes, itself, a part of your life.

To know is to live; but to know God is to live eternally. And God is known in the One He sent forth, Jesus Christ the sinless and eternal, He who did not fail when the hour came, and whose prayer for glorification has now been heard.

III

The Lord's Prayer contains seven petitions, and I find also seven in the high priestly prayer.

We find the first petition by joining the first part of verse 6 with the middle of the 11th. It then reads thus: "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me—Holy Father, keep them in thy name."

The name which He manifested to His friends He mentions in the prayer itself: Holy Father. And first and foremost He sees that it is this they need—to be kept in that name. It corresponds to the first petition He taught them: "Hallowed be thy name."

They knew Him by name before this. We have already called attention to the fact that it was nothing new for Israel to call God Father. But Jesus was the first to manifest the Father-name, and the only one who was able to do it.

There was a time when I knew the sea only by name. It was that great open expanse upon the map that was colored light blue. I knew

that it existed, but I knew it only as an idea. The time came when I sailed across the Pacific. Then I experienced what the sea is. A world of beauty, so blue that I had never dreamed there was such a blue, over which flying fish with scales of gleaming silver played; again it could be a milky white, like dull glass, rippled by chilling breezes; a great blanket which invisible angel-hands seemed to spread out as we passed by; and like rose-red silk at sunset, with frolicsome dolphins making folds in it. What did it not bear in its strong embrace—what did it not hide in its deep bosom, this ocean? Shoals of lightning-like fish, great mounds of sunken treasure, swarming things, shapeless monsters, lost men, a thousand ships, each headed for its goal. The sea had revealed its secrets to me: it manifested its name.

Holy Father—it was this name which He revealed to us human beings. A flood of grace, a world of love, an ocean of purity and light. According to Paul, each father-relationship on earth gets its name from Him—that is to say, that which in this life we find of parental love toward children, the holiest of all earthly loves, has its origin in and is a faint reflection of God's feeling toward us. Therefore it was always this picture which Jesus used when He wanted to paint God's love for us: that father who did not have the heart to give stones or serpents to His little children when they asked for bread and eggs;

and who ran to meet them and embraced them when they were grown and had journeyed far away from their childhood home (though they could never get away from their father's love); and who went out into the chill of the evening bare-headed to ask the ungrateful and sullen son to come inside and rejoice with the others.

This love can endure much. This became very clear to me when I once visited a young man in one of our prisons. He was still a big child, and one of the hardest things for him was the thought that he could not get home for Christmas Eve; and worst of all, when he would be released he could not show himself anywhere. I said to him, "You must be ready to face the fact that most of your acquaintances will have nothing to do with you until you have shown them that you have become a new man. The world must have proofs and will hear of nothing else. For the time being you will have to be content with a very few friends and your home; it will even be a little hard for these friends and relatives, for they will rather fear a repetition of the old difficulty. But there is God." And in that moment it became so clear to me, and I incline to believe also to him, how great God's love really is, that He can at once forgive a man, as soon as He has seen that he is in real earnest, for He knows the heart and needs no proofs.

Such is God's love: it can overlook, yea, and it can endure. How often have I not had to

think of this! A young man had fallen ill and had been brought to the hospital. On the first Sunday I came to see him his bed was literally besieged by friends who, with the best of intentions, had brought him sweets and questionable papers and flowers. However, by next Sunday it had become somewhat easier to see him. Weeks and months passed —and now he was allowed to lie there alone both on week-days and Sundays. That is to say, he was not entirely alone; almost every day an elderly woman, poorly clad, would come with some little thing in a package. She came even if only for a few moments; on the days she could not come, a little girl took her place. It was mother and sister; they held out when the love of strangers had long since tired. It soon does tire of sitting at a sick-bed. And the love of God could endure through thousands of years without tiring of the race; you, yourself, know how it held out in your case and, notwithstanding all, has not tired yet.

Such is God's love; it overlooks, notwithstanding everything; it endures to the last; yes, it endures eternally.

For when the time comes that the faithful hearts, with their unfailing love, cease to beat, and the beloved faces hide themselves away from us because they have been called elsewhere, there is always a great, loving heart that is left—God's love will embrace both them and us. For it is eternal.

And it is this name, this love, that Jesus has revealed. We could not have believed in it, we should hardly have dared to imagine it, if He had not come to us with a greeting from home and assured us as to this love and revealed it to us by living and dying as our brother in our midst. And when men point to the earthquake in Messina and to the murderous wars and the want and injustice that shriek to heaven, and say: "We find no loving God in the world," we answer: "Neither did we find Him in the world, and He was not in the earthquake, and He is eternally innocent as to murder and need and injustice; but we have seen Him in the countenance of Jesus Christ. When one has once seen Him there, nothing can ever come upon us which is able to erase that love; but we take closer refuge in it when sorrows and afflictions come.

—Now the hour had come when He was to take leave of His friends; He saw their trusting, troubled eyes, and read their frightened thoughts: You would not leave us, Jesus —surely you would not go? What will become of us?

And He knew that if they could be kept in that name, in that love which He had revealed to them, they would never fail utterly. Therefore His first prayer was for them, now that He was no longer to be in the world, but they were to be in the world: that they might be kept in that holy Father-name.

And that, too, is our first and greatest need,

we who are still here in this world: that the love of God in Jesus Christ, which overlooks and endures and is eternal, may become a reality for us and that it may remain so.

IV

They must have been unusually troubled. And as is the case in all human sorrow, there was in theirs a good deal of self-love; they thought more of themselves than of Him. He tried to help them out of this: "But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." They could not make themselves ask Him a thing, but only brooded over their own sorrow.* Later He sought for a little help from them; He to whom they had always fled for refuge, almost clung to them and asked them to watch just that one hour with Him; but when He needed them more than ever before, they were unable to give Him any aid; red from grief and tired of staring their impending loss in the face, their eyes closed; they confessed later: We could not watch because of our sorrow.

Against this background His second prayer for them is doubly beautiful. He prays: "that they may have my joy made full in themselves."

It was His good pleasure that they should

*John 14:28—If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father.

be genuinely happy, because He loved them so much. If only He might talk to them until they became happy; if only He might, so to speak, pray them happy, until the same joy that overwhelmed His own heart would well up in theirs! For notwithstanding the acute sympathy which so often characterized Him, and notwithstanding the deep longing for home which at times surged within Him, notwithstanding the disappointment which He had to suffer daily, a deep and secret joy has been the underlying note in His life. And the spring of this joy has undoubtedly been His trusting and undisturbed rest in the Father's love.

It was this same joy which He so longed to see in the lives of His disciples. If only they could really be made to comprehend with mind and soul that God was their Father and that they were kept as children in His love, there would then be no danger that they should lose this joy.

And it was not solely because He loved them that He wished them this full joy; without it they could not accomplish anything. For it was they who were to continue His work. He knew this victory was assured to eleven lads who could go radiantly out into the world with His message. But if they were to go with troubled faces and heavy hearts, none would believe the glad tidings.

This matter of fully owning His joy—what a hard thing it seems to us. We are all too

well acquainted with this self-reproach because we are not happier, this saying to ourselves, "You ought to be happy." Such a proceeding never made us happier. And we have tried to seek after our lost joy, to call out to it: O Joy, where are you? But it could not be found; and when finally we did think we had found it, it sat at our side looking at us with a mournful smile and shaking its head. Yet alas, it was this joy that we could least of all afford to lose. For the children of men love joy, they flock around those people whom Nature has endowed with a happy spirit; they always want to be where there are smiling faces and happy laughter. They prefer to avoid sour faces and discontented complainings, for there are always plenty of such. So if we are to accomplish anything for God, we must see to it that we have a supply of His joy; and in the long run we cannot endure without it. So it was that He prayed that His joy might dwell in us in its fullness.

Why does joy flee from us? Where is the hole through which it slips away?

Well, there is much that could be said on that point. If the question were to be answered in a thorough-going manner, we should have to speak of weakened nerves, and inherited melancholy, and many other things. This, however, lies outside of the boundaries of this chapter. Only one thing shall be mentioned — joy's worst enemy, that which ir-

resistibly steals and poisons our joy if it gains the upper hand.

His third petition is: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Again we are reminded of the Lord's Prayer: "Deliver us from evil!" On this evening it has an especially dark background: He has just seen one of those who had been God's gift to Him allow himself to be completely swallowed up by evil. "While I was with them," He says, "I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Yes, to one of them it had come, this evil; it had begun as an unseen germ; in the face of warnings and loving protection the destroying weed had been permitted to grow in his heart and evil had increased with dreadful rapidity, and the end had been that he was washed away in the black stream of damnation.

He does not explain the riddle of evil to us. A riddle it will always be, and—mark these words well—it will remain a riddle whether we believe in God or not. In the last analysis all the riddles in Christian thought and in our whole existence may be reduced to this one thing—the origin of evil. The world which God created from nothing was very good; he who first sinned used his creative power which he had borrowed from God to create the evil

from nothing. Now it is here; and we find ourselves staring down into that which is just as incomprehensible—that depth of horror which is called damnation. Nor does He give us any explanation of that; I wonder, after all, if He will give us one on the day of His revealing. He mentions it as a reality, as something which threw its tentacles around a soul and pulled it down to itself; and He shuts out all controversial and despairing thoughts with the pious, simple expression: "that the scripture might be fulfilled." Stop thou here also! You have also often thought: But in that case he (Judas) was predestined to be lost, so he had no free will, and hence to that extent he was innocent. I have already said that the predictions of Scripture seem to me to be couched in such a freedom of form that the free will may fulfill them as it wills, but that there was yet a way open to the unfortunate one; but as to what subsequently happens, it is always wisest to let the reality stand and seek for that which can strengthen our faith; and also in this point Jesus is our great example. It sounds, at last, as one great refrain through the story of His Passion: This is done that the Scripture might be fulfilled. When the hour of darkness came, His burdened soul took refuge in the place where He had sought support at the beginning of His course, when He met the tempter in the wilderness; and when all others seemed to fail Him, the Scriptures failed not,

but continued to speak their comforting words to Him.

It is that thing—the evil—which He sees as their most dangerous enemy. It stretched out its tentacles to take them on that evil night. If it should get hold of them, if it should gain the ascendancy, He knew that their joy would forever be at an end. From this, above all, they must be protected.

Take us with you; O, take us with you! Some would doubtless have prayed thus; and how willingly He would have done it. Nevertheless, this was not the way; and newly-awakened persons who wish most heartily that they might die at once and be given wings to fly away to heaven do not have their wish fulfilled. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world," He says. For they have yet something to learn here, and they have much work to do.

O, but hide us then, hide us.

So others would have prayed; and how willingly He would have done it. And yet this was not the way either; and monks and pietists who withdraw from this dangerous world to live their quiet life behind the white walls of a cloister and in sheltered little meetings fail also to fulfill God's purpose in their lives, for the evil moves along with them and they flee from their task. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world," He says, "but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." It is in this world they are

to be ripened, and here they are to continue His work and extend His Kingdom; and instead of being consumed by celestial homesickness or hiding themselves in timid loneliness, they are to be guarded by the strong intercession of their Savior wheresoever they go.

V

"Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? . . . sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire; but do thou rule over it."

It is the old saying to Cain, and the age-old experience in every man's life. That shadow on the brow, that dark and gloomy expression—they come from this evil which lay like a serpent, watching like a beast of prey before the door until it found a crack through which it squeezed and threw its coils crushingly about our heart's joy; but we ought to rule over sin.

And the fourth prayer of Jesus gives us a good suggestion as to how to gain the upper hand in the battle with sin. We shall find it when we connect the beginning of the fourteenth with the seventeenth verse. Then it reads: "I have given them thy word; . . . Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth."

The best way to be protected from the evil is to be established in the good—to be sanctified. That means to get the same nature as

God has, for He is holy. And it is easy to understand: the more goodness, purity, compassion, joy, and peace fill us, the less room there will be for egoism, impurity, unconcern, despondency, and doubt. It was the positive way which Paul also pointed out when he said, "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

He has given us the supreme means by which to reach this holiness: "I have given them thy word." It is the experience of Christians that there is a very definite relationship between the faithfulness with which they use the Word of God and the progress they make in sanctification. We take the expression "the Word of God" in its simplest meaning—the word we have in our Bible, particularly that which we find in our New Testament and very particularly all of the words which are introduced by the expression, "Jesus said." In the same degree that we appropriate God's Word and make it a regular habit of our lives to read it and take it to heart—preferably as the first work of the day—in the same degree will our growth as Christians in sanctification be sound, constant, and symmetrical. But if we are careless on this point and become slovenly in our reading, so that we do not take time to meditate on and become absorbed in the Word, often neglecting it entirely, it will not be long until irregular habits, uncertainty in spiritual discernment, and retrogression in the spiritual life will be

noticed. The spiritual life is a thing rare and delicate and exceedingly sensitive; at times it seems to me that I can notice, in the form of uncertainty and discontent, the effect of just one morning in which I have hurried my devotions or completely omitted them. And the men of God to whom we like most to listen and from whom we learn most are the ones who have gone deep into the Word and who have long been accustomed to draw water from its springs.

I believe I can point out at least one of the reasons why God's Word has this remarkable power to sanctify the Christian. It is because He Himself is there. "Thy word is truth," says Jesus, and by this is meant not merely that it brings us reliable enlightenment as to the revealed religion, but also that there is a living reality back of the Word, and this reality is His very person and life. He has told all these things to us—He has lived them Himself. He vouches for its truth with His life and with His death. Hence He can say in this very connection this deep and remarkable word: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." I do not understand all that is contained in these words. But among other things it awakens in me the thought of a holy sacrificial service. "I sanctify myself"—that is to say, I dedicate myself, dedicate myself as the sacrifice, and lay myself upon the altar. He had always done this; His life had been

a daily sacrifice, He had dedicated each day to God, in order that His disciples, by looking upon Him and following Him, might be sanctified as He was. And this He wanted to do to the last; He would give His last day to God, His life-blood He would give in obedience and also through this He would win holiness for them all. But this life which He gave each day and which shone forth from Him and spoke in His words, comes to meet us to this very day in His Word. And the death to which He voluntarily surrendered Himself is painted in the Scriptures as though it were taking place before our very eyes. That is why the Word can sanctify. It presents to us the great prototype and it also speaks to us about sanctifying ourselves for them if we are to be a blessing for those among whom we live. And it also gives us power to reach our goal: His Spirit is still in the Word, and His Word is spirit and life; when He speaks, it is done; when He commands, it stands fast. This is experience; and the everyday experience is lifted and transfigured into a festal hour when the Word is mute as to the inexpressible, and His death is had in remembrance in the presence of the Living One, who sanctifies Himself for them; I am thinking of those moments when Christians, at the word of our Lord, kneel and receive the Sacrament.

VI

The impending departure marks all of His utterances, also His fifth petition: "that they may all be one."

This prayer for unity must be interpreted in the light of the eve of His departure when it was first uttered. The later struggles and divisions in the church have since colored this prayer for unity; the idea of alliance has entered in; and when we hear it prayed (a thing which happens all too seldom), we usually think of it as meaning that all branches of the church, Reformed and Lutherans, Methodists and Baptists, and at times even the Catholics, must be united—perhaps even that the church parties of Denmark are to find each other and become one!

There is no doubt that it is highly necessary that this prayer be prayed and that the spirit which can use it be fostered. Another question is as to how we are to conceive of its fulfilment, and how it may best be worked out and realized. A co-operative work, to say nothing of an amalgamation, can hardly take place for the time being; but something would be achieved if the strong church party (in Denmark) would stop classifying the sects and Catholics with Mormons and Spiritualists; and if the many little sects and foreign churches would cease their tactless propaganda. The cleft between the church and the world is so broad, and is growing more and more so, that the danger from our strong,

common enemy ought to be able to unite all branches of the church in an inner unity. To undertake a vigorous work side by side, though as separate entities, both among the unbelievers in Christendom and out on the mission field, with perhaps an occasional meeting for prayer and edification would be a beginning in the right direction. The Protestant mission societies and the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations (the latter having taken the prayer for unity, John 17:21, as their motto and put it into their emblem) have made a wise and beautiful beginning in this matter. But complete unity, also outwardly, will perhaps not be achieved before the last, great tribulation and our Lord's second coming.

But when Jesus prayed this prayer, His thought, as has been mentioned, was not so much for the union of the church divisions which did not yet exist; He prayed for the little circle of friends which He was leaving. If only they could really care a great deal for each other! If only they would really stand together and share all sorrows and joys with each other! If only they would work together as brothers, help each other, love each other! Then this world and the prince of this world would never wholly prevail over them. And then they would be in a position to win the world. Their common prayer would be able to conquer all hindrances; their inward love would draw souls to them; their unity would

cause the world to believe in their Lord's and their divine mission.

This prayer, then, primarily concerns us in the field in which we live and work as Christians. To come to care much for each other there, to be able to dismiss all antipathies and jealousies there, to overlook slights and misunderstandings and differences of meaning there, to be able to open our hearts for each other and pray together—this is still the way to win the world that surrounds us.

There are especially two means by which this unity will be promoted.

The first is to look to Jesus. The more we are all able to look up to the same living Savior, the more the glory which He gave us can fill us all with thanks, the more each one of us can learn to reach out and give the crown to Him and give Him the place as supreme in all relationships, the sooner will believers become one; and then there will surely be outward victories also.

The second means is to look forward toward our hope. The more we learn to lift ourselves beyond the trivialities of our time, the more we look forward to the coming tribulations and the promised victory, the more we work toward the salvation of Israel, the conquering of the heathen world, and the cleansing of His church, the more we look up toward Him who has promised to return in glory, the more will our small points of dis-

pute fall away and Christian hearts unite, as it were, in one great heart-throb.

And the thoughts of Jesus advance also—from the prayer for unity to hope of glory.

"Father, I desire (or as it may also be translated, 'Father, I will')"—thus the sixth petition begins.

I listen involuntarily when I hear Him speak thus. It must be that a most urgent prayer is to be uttered, since He sets that strong "I will" before His Father. Once before I have heard Him say, "I will," and then, too, it was something which concerned Him intimately. A miserable soul met Him at the foot of the mountain and entreated Him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Deeply moved, He answered with authority, "I will; be thou made clean." I can understand this. If there is anything He desires for us with all His soul, it is to help us to get a clean heart.

And now I hear His voice again, saying, "Father, I will." "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

He sees it all before Him. He sees the multicolored, eternally new glory which was before His eyes before time was—and He sees them, His poor, troubled, faithful friends coming home to share it all with Him. There they are, standing down at the door, all those simple, brave fishermen, scarcely knowing what

to do with their hands, speechless at all they see, hardly daring to come closer.

Why do you stand there—come closer—it is all yours. Now you are home.

Welcome, Peter, after all your struggles; here is the inheritance which lay hidden away for you; there is the throne you have earned.

Come here, Thomas; faith is no longer needed; now you can see with your own glorified vision and be saved.

Well met, my silent Jacob, who first gave up your life for me; enjoy your reward, now, and be glad in all eternity!

And you, my disciple of love, who remained true to the last, here is a place for you again at my side, just as in former days.

In truth, my faithful friends, this is the day to which I have long looked forward with joy; when I walked among you I could not tell you what my glory was—but now you can see for yourselves.

O Jesus, it lies so far in the future. What if we never get there? You know, better than we ourselves do, how weak we are and how little we can do. It will be very dark here when you have left us. Do you think we shall ever see that glory?

Then He prays His seventh and last prayer: "O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the

love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them."

"And I in them." Surely then Heaven itself has come down into the room to them. For where He is, there is life and salvation—and He will be **in** them.

The prayer has reached its zenith. He in them—then they are kept forever in the holy Father-name which He had revealed to them. Then they can never wholly lose their joy; He and His joy are in them in fullness; then they are well protected against the evil, sanctified in the truth, and united as one. And then the glory of Heaven is one day assured them, for they bore it about with them while here on earth: **He was in them.**

Does this mean us also? It means us also. "And I made known unto them thy name"—so He prayed, "and will make it known." He looks into the future when He, Christ, shall be in Heaven, and we, His men, must yet walk on earth. In that day we shall not be far from each other, for He will be in them.

THE END.

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